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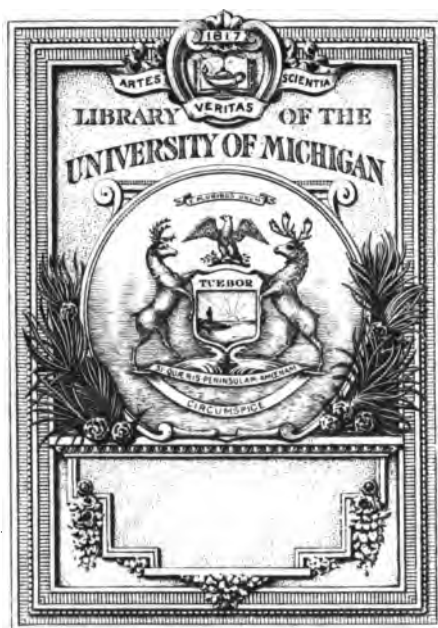
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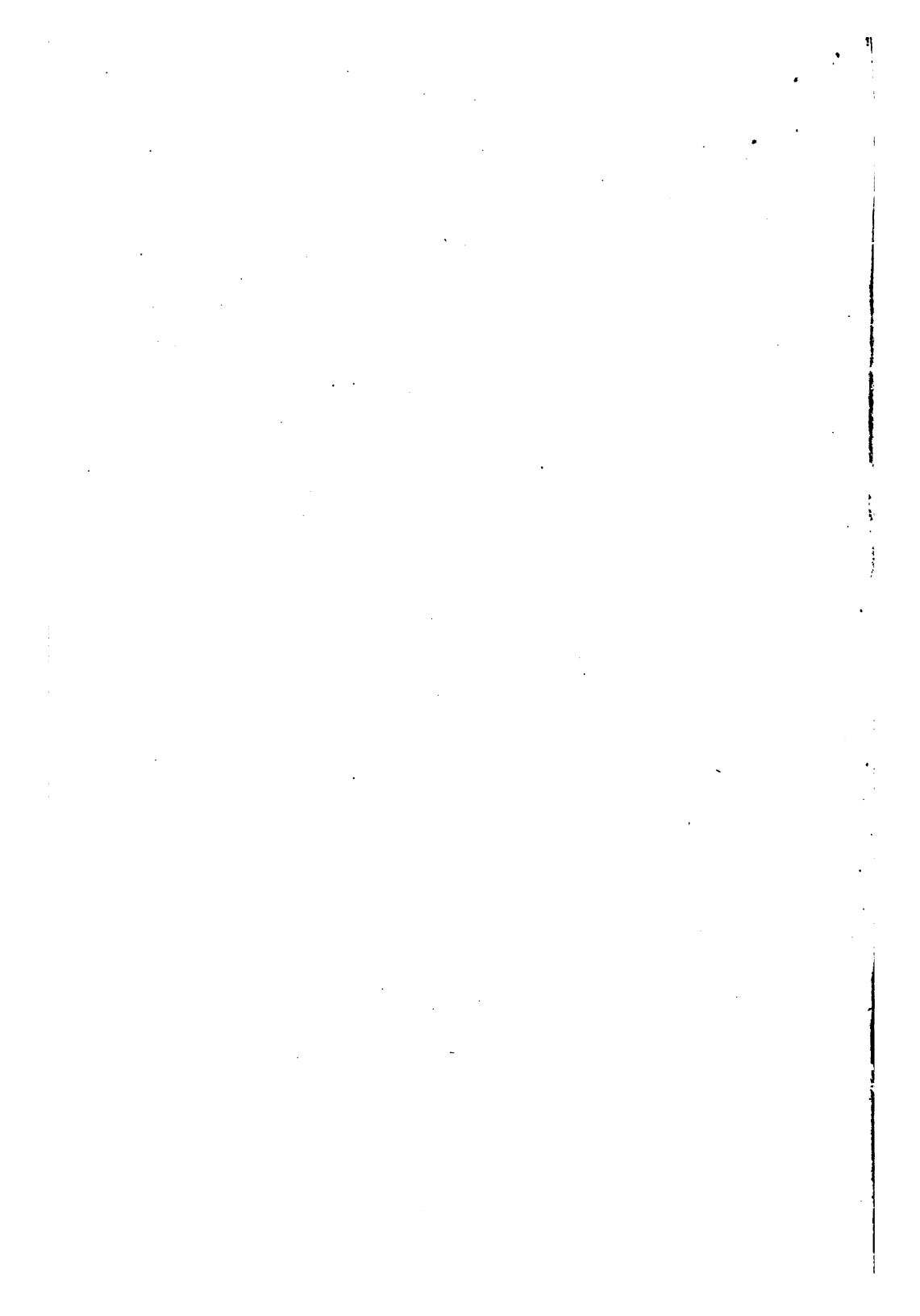
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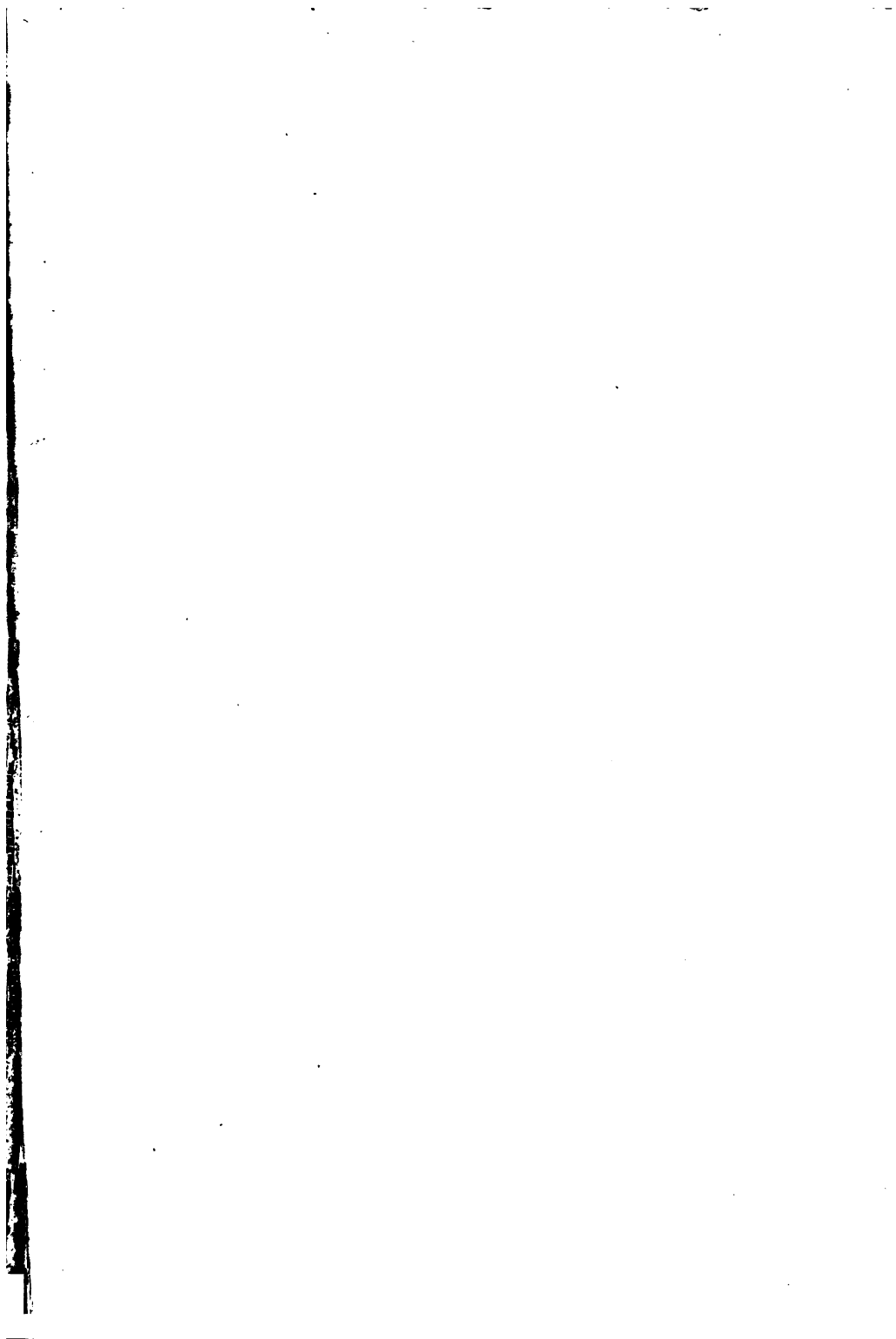
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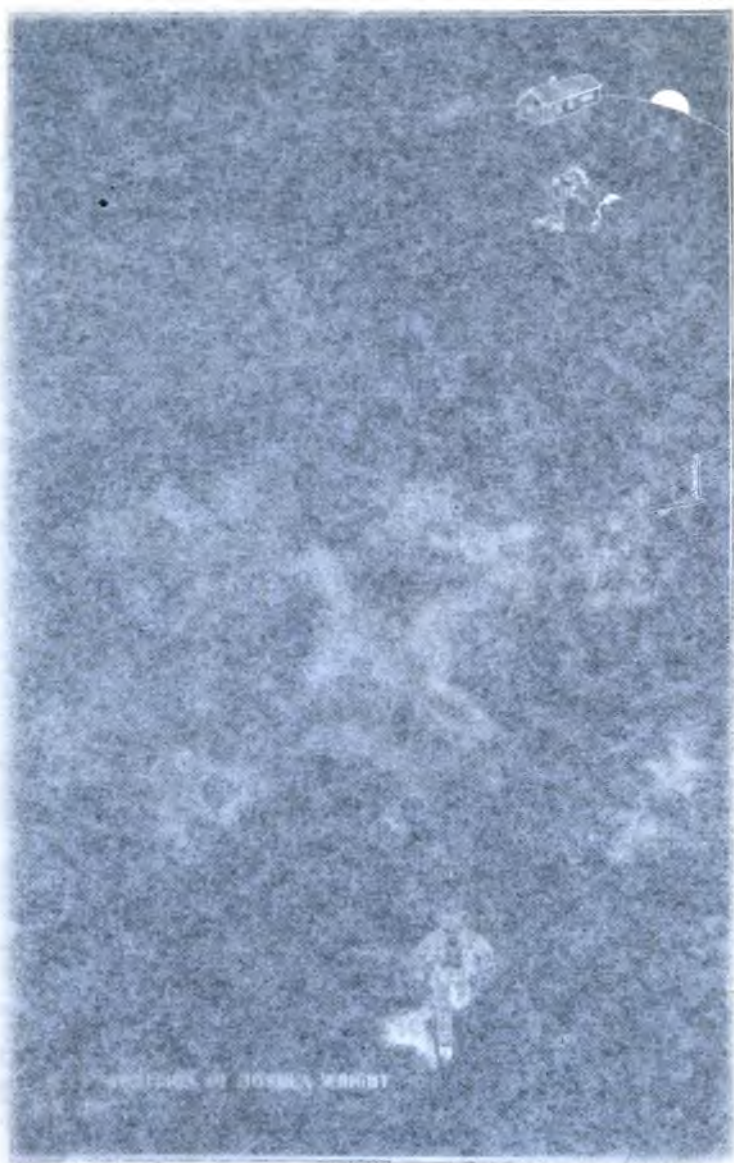


BY

A. WRIGHT, B.A.



NEW YORK  
TROMSON AND SMITH  
1904





*Smith, Titus K*

# THE BOOK AGENT: HIS BOOK.

BY

JOSHUA WRIGHT, B.A. *copyrighted*



NEW YORK  
THOMSON AND SMITH

1904



**COPYRIGHTED 1904**

**BY**

**TITUS K. SMITH**

## **Dedication**

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**This book is deadicated to the author of Artemus  
Ward—His Book ” : he cannot resist.**



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## Publisher's Preface

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THE preface of a good book may be brief; few apologies are required. This work is not a book, but a series of literary etchings on the landscapes of humanity. These etchings placed in composite arrangement on the mirror of life form a satire which attaches itself to the image of those who look therein.

What a picturesque figure in literature is Don Quixote charging upon the windmills! But these etchings impale over against the mind's horizon the figure of a windmill pursuing the Don Quixotes of our modern age. And what man is not a Don Quixote, since the smallest vicissitude of life may change his dearest reality to a mere phantasm, so that his charge is upon the void? In such spirit has our author writ.

Further we need only say with voice attuned to the lyre of Catullus, to whom apologies——

Let those now laugh  
Who never laughed before;  
And those who always laughed,  
Now laugh the more.

This work is that of one Joshua Wright, B.A., deceased, and left to us by will with a request for publication as a thank-offering to an appreciative world. Our course therefore is not optional.

Everything else will be found explained in the book.

Respectfully,

THE PUBLISHERS.

June 1, 1904.

P.S.—To diverse motives and afflatus have authors of all ages ascribed their varied productions. Joshua Wright had an inspiration which, Pepys-like, he naively recorded in his diary for our delectation, thus:

“Dec. 26, 1900.—Took a light supper last night, after a heavy Christmas dinner, but miscalculated and found myself going hungry to bed, both the cook and my wife having already retired when I thought of having something to eat at the last moment. Thought to myself, ‘I shall sleep well if the doctors’ theory of stomach piety be correct.’ And so I did until toward morning when I had an extraordinary dream, which was to the effect that I was, with a companion, travelling in the Far West; and, night coming on, we put up at a farm where we turned our horses into the barnyard, and ourselves went to bed outside on our uncovered wagon.



Scarcely had I fallen asleep when my partner got up (half awakening me), and walked about; whereupon an entire stranger to me, an audacious person whom I liked not at all, came and took the vacant berth beside me. Thereupon I also arose and proceeded to walk about the place, presently meeting my companion who, with one or two other men, was looking over the barnyard fence at several horses running to and fro, one of them *violently*; at which some one near me shouted, 'The horse is mad' (meaning hydrophobia). At this terror struck her talons into me. The horse was now coming toward us, and we started to run, seeing which the horse cleared the bars and started after me in mad pursuit as quickly as he could swerve around, for I had run at a right angle with his first direction.

"I now threw myself through another high fence, whose lower bars had been left out of place by Providence and a negligent farmer, and ran as fast as I could.

"Fortunately this second fence baffled the horse, so that it seemed, with my legs geared to high speed by fear, I should escape to a safe place; but it was not long before the furious beast cleared this fence also and continued the pursuit. Running now for life, I was quite in touch of shelter when the animal came that close, his whistling snort entered my ear

and his hot breath bedewed my cheek; at which juncture I collapsed, and, falling heavily to the ground, awoke—undone by sickly terror, to find—my wife's mouth close to my ear and she snoring outrageously.

“The hallucinated single mind will doubtless smile at this, but I feel assured of the sympathy of all wedded men, especially as the matter connects with consequences: for, being angry at this wanton suffering put upon me, I pushed her violently to the other side of the bed. Adequate explanations of such occurrences are difficult to make, and we became estranged. *This drove me to literature as an occupation.*”

## An Editorial Interpolation.

---

DISCOVERED EVIDENCES OF AN ATTEMPT AT MONOPOLY BY COMBINING THE FUNCTIONS OF AUTHOR, PUBLISHER AND VENDOR IN ONE PERSON.

Nothing is so pathetic as are remains. Joshua Wright, B.A., the prince of book agents, is no more. His mortal coil shuffled him off, much against his will, which was located in the mind and not in the coil.

Barring a deformity mentioned in his will, and that an acquired one, he was a normal being. But, as the editor has already intimated, he left remains.

One of these is in the shape of a Siamese-twin postal card, reading as follows, in print:

“DEAR SIR:

“Are you subject to cachinnations—those involuntary seizures which contract the diaphragm, thrillingly wobble the nether hemisphere, ventilate the lungs and oscillate the brain, *all in one ecstatically simultaneous act*? If so, you are a normal man and would enjoy reading the ‘Autobiography

of a Book Agent.' Your order will inflate us with the emotion of joy. A postal card will bring it. We provide the postal card.

"Yours truly,  
"JOSHUA WRIGHT."

What effect this communication, addressed to the public at large, had upon the recipients, is not clearly shown. There were some favorable responses, and among them also these two:

(1) "J. WRIGHT, Esq.

"Dear Sir: I have all the cough medicine I need.

"Yours truly,  
"(Signed.)"

(2) "MR. JOSHUA WRIGHT.

"Dear Sir: I am subject to no kinds of fits at present.

"Sincerely yours,  
"(Signed.)"

From these replies we may judge that some men mistook Mr. Wright's literary letter for a patent medicine circular. Presumably they are incapable even now of apprehending what they missed. Probably the author found them the deterrant which resolved him not to venture upon the publication of his writings. His shall still be the glory of the achievement, and we will take the profit.

His will is hereto annexed:

## The Author's Will.

---

### THE FIRST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF JOSHUA WRIGHT, B.A.

I, Joshua Wright, B.A., without being duly sworn, do depose and say:

FIRSTLY: That I make my will by a deposition because when a man performs this act he deposes himself and leaves the rulership of the world to others.

SECONDLY: That to be a book agent requires a sound understanding, the business being done mostly by walking.

THIRDLY: That the delights of the book agency business are such that I feel all men should know and enjoy them.

FOURTHLY: That I know of only two ways to enjoy these delights; either by becoming a book agent (which to some is "impossible") or through the memoirs of a book agent.

FIFTHLY: That I have been a book agent sufficiently long to wear off the lower ends of my legs until there remain now mere stumps thereof.

SIXTHLY: That I feel it due to myself that others should hereafter do the walking; my readers after buying this book, and the agents who shall sell it.

SEVENTHLY: That all the sense which I had in my feet being driven into my head I feel pregnant with thought that I feel must be delivered.

EIGHTHLY: That I believe this deliverance should be made now before my entire body be worn away.

NINTHLY: That on account of the aforementioned eight reasons, I do now hereby, by the instrument of writing, will and bequeath my memoirs to whomsoever these presents may come.

TENTHLY: That I make this bequest without recall—irrevocably.

ELEVENTHLY: That, so far as I know, I am of sound and disposing mind; of the disposing quality I do know.

TWELFTHLY: That I desire to be at peace with all men, being now unable to run either fast or long.

Pax vobiscum,

JOSHUA WRIGHT, B.A.

## Mr. Wright's Soliloquy on Autobiography.

---

Whether a man should write his own biography or have it written for him is the question. Whether "tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous (literary) fortune" placed upon him by a strange biographer; or "to take arms against a sea" of criticism on the immodesty of making one's own fortune in reputation, is the problem.

We choose the latter; and give reasons for the choice; among which the chief is the incapacity of those who would serve us in the matter. Another is the debatable question whether any man has the right to leave this world without saying a proper adieu to it. I trow not, if the refinements of civilization have any texture whatsoever.

And surely now that even criminals find it necessary for the world's content to turn author and set forth their experiences, I may be pardoned if I propose to do the same; and to do my writing before it becomes criminal to write a book. The time now is and soon will be more so when to do

anything in this free country one must have a license; witness plumbers, liquor sellers, life insurance agents, etc. Ere long 'twill be authors licensed, and as I doubt my ability to obtain a license, I must make haste. Moreover, I might die; then what a loss to the world that is, as well as to those worlds to come—the future generations; for each generation is a world in itself. Surely I may be excused for hastily deluging the world with a book; for, if I live, the future licensing of authors would work as much harm to both myself and the world as death.

You perhaps doubt that this is coming? Everything has once been doubted. Your doubts are vain. By 1909½ at the present rate of progress, accelerated by the Gook-lovers' Library delivery system, the world will stand aghast at literature, and those who add to it will be regarded as public enemies. Then what? Why, then, as this must still remain a free country and the occupation (I was going to say vocation—but a man or woman is occupied, *possessed*, if he or she hatcheth a book, and I therefore say *occupation*) of authorship may not be prohibited, authors must be licensed, after passing a plumber's civil service examination. As to book agents, they will be extinct, as they are almost even now. Like the last Great Auk extincted within the



memory of living men, I, at this writing, sit on a shelf in the Cliff of Time, *solitary*. Had the last Great Auk but left his autobiography! I cannot leave the world as he has done—in eclipse of Great Auks.

Perforce of natural history a few of the last specimens, besides myself, might, upon demise, be stuffed. But who shall stuff them right? I see no hope for posterity unless I write. Did not the preacher only yesterday say there were two easy ways of a man distinguishing himself—by living a good life or by writing a book? Easy as is the former, I prefer the latter. Moreover, no man has a right to leave this world without making a biographical adieu to it. It is but politeness. Let me tell you something.

About the year 18— it became the salutary custom of men to have their biographies written by themselves. I say salutary since no one knows a man as he knows himself. Moreover the subject's memory more easily adapts itself to what shall be remembered and what forgotten in the biography. Therefore I hold that no biography can be accurate unless written by the subject himself. Modesty has too often in the past projected itself across the path of this sacred duty and obstructed it. Even now men will resort to the expedient of getting a friend

or a professional biographer to append his name to the sketch composed by themselves, still preserving their modesty. And as every need instantly raises up from the dry bones of desuetude an army of men to fill it, so has this need of modesty (howbeit I consider it an artificial or affected need) raised up the professional biographers who lend their names to sketches as did the hired mourners at funerals in former times (as if the family could not mourn copiously enough—an impossible thing, to my mind, unless the dier was foolish enough to die perniciously rich).

The majority of men having recourse to this antiquated method of mourning over their hitherto buried noticeablenesses, necessarily the minority must fall into line. Indeed, if a man be recalcitrant in this connection the professional biographer can speedily subdue him by providing and offering to publish a notoriously false biography. Hence if a man be wise—not partly bereft of his senses—he will when invited to write his own biography under a loaned name, quickly accept the loan while the lender is yet in the way with him.

By which I may, to the illogical mind, prove that I am not wise, since I refuse to accept such an offer. My own name is good enough; I have worn it for forty years without seeing it threadbare in any

part. But if in consequence of this step the author shall be maligned and otherwise abused, either while he is dead or alive, let the reader not be afraid; I have predicted it, and all maligning is false—this is my only true and authorized biography, and it is true because it is written by myself. Even when I speak of myself occasionally in the third person it is still true and done by myself.

Let me also add that this biography is not impelled by an inflation of the inhalation of the noxious air of genius, but was solely written for the benefit of the reader and his great edification.

And “as genius is to madness near allied,” so let it not be forgotten that the most meek reclusion follows hard upon the heels of sheer obtrusion. The frequent use of the personal pronoun I is therefore the depth of modesty instead of the pinnacle of egotism.

I have tried to make it good. If it isn't good I cannot make it so. But it isn't all for you; *you* will know *which*.

J. W.

## Chapter 1.

---

### MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCES WITH THE BOOK BUSINESS.



AT the cross-roads, half a mile from my home, stood our country school house when I was twelve years of age. It was furnished with a stove for a centre piece and long wooden desks with equally long wooden benches, arranged on either side of the room from the platform back to the rear wall. The floor, full of knotholes, gave vent to many a mouse on crumbs bent and also to titters from those of us who, busy studying, saw the mouse. The school was managed by a sort of Canadian Governor-General yearly appointed by the Crown consisting of the Township School Board. The subjects of the school had no voice in his selection—same as in Canada. Nevertheless if a tutor proved unpopular with the citizenship of the school, he was recalled, at the end of his term, and another was sent. A *new* broom always sweeps well.

The year referred to we had appointed us a teacher who, during the vacation season—when everything was frightfully dull—went over to the Methodist persuasion, hook, bob and sinker. When school opened he was rosy with religious delight. The whole world was hallelujah, except the portion still unconverted, which was nearly the whole school. Wherefore, prayers, morning, noon and night; presently at recesses also. Prayer without kneeling was, however, soon considered not full-fledged prayer; therefore we were ordered to kneel—in the mud an eighth of an inch thick on the board floor. Every child now wore spots—large ones—on his knees, which he brought home to mother. Cleanly motherhood rose up in wrath, and in a few days the school director, who somehow had got wind of our religious debauch, came to visit the school and gave new directions as to prayers. The teacher considered this an interference with Providence, and a persecution of the Methodists, perhaps largely the latter. He was aggrieved but more than ever resolved to convert all children in his charge before it should be too late. Anyway, unless all prophecies failed the world was soon to come to an end. I thought so too, for the teacher in his sermons connected with scripture readings had proved his case. It was to come in a cata-

clysmic style, unpicturable in words, but easily portrayed by the imagination.

In February on my way home from school, at 4.30 in the afternoon, a huge snow cloud, bulging with cotton batting, loomed up high from the north-west. The snow fell fast and in large flakes, and—horror upon horrors!—it thundered and lighteninged as in August. At twelve I was sure this meant the “end of the world.” I had never seen the like before. I did not loiter on the way that evening, at least as soon as I was sure there was still ground to run upon. My sleep was uneasy. I had catalogued all the sins I could remember and asked their forgiveness in my evening prayers *en masse*—a good job better done in any event, but better now. In the morning the end of the world had not yet come, but it was a narrow escape in my judgment.

A teacher who could bring us so close to the end of the world was, to my mind, a man worth considering by any one who prized wisdom—which I did. And when the teacher announced at the end of the school week that he would be glad to receive visits from any scholars who had inclination (and liberty from chores) on Saturdays, either with a view to help in lessons or sociability, it struck me as a more than kind invitation. This teacher

was beneficent, if a boy of twelve knows what that is. Yet I had some misgivings also. But an errand to the village store on Saturday brought me so near the teacher's office (he kept a private office in a little building detached from the house) that I perambulated in in a sort of visionary trance. My most distinct notion was that the visit might make me "solid" with the teacher.

I knocked at the door and was welcomed in. My conversation was short in some parts, but the teacher helped out by leading questions and by showing me some of his books. By and bye he asked me if I was "saved." "I hope so," was my reply. "Don't you often have a feeling of being full of sin?" he continued. I said that was how I felt most of the time. "Then I fear you are not yet saved," said he. I acquiesced. "What do you say if we kneel and have prayers right now?" he asked. I could not refuse, and we knelt. During that prayer I was again near the end of the world. I was scared "to beat the band." Finally we arose. "Do you feel better now?" he inquired. I said, much better.

"Now," saith he, "do you have a Bible?" I said we had two; one large one owned by my mother and another not so big by my father. "But do you have a Bible of your own?" he persisted. I said I had only a little Testament which I had bought with

red tickets in Sunday school. Yes, that was very good, but I ought to have a whole Bible. I thought so too. "How would you like to own a Bible like this?"—getting out of a drawer a fat little volume bound in flexible red morocco and full gilt. I admired it and inquired the price. It was priced at only \$2.50 and worth \$3.00. I could buy it, and if my pocket was not prepared for this surprise, I could pay in school during the week following. No money having to go "over the counter" I took that Bible at \$2.50 and started homeward. On the way I looked at its bright red cover several times and admired the gilt-edgedness of the work, and—I also fell to thinking where I should get the \$2.50, since at that time pennies were all I handled customarily. How long, at three cents a week—figuring my prospects at their best—would it take me to get together \$2.50? Over eighty weeks—an eternity at that age. My head could not contain the length of time. I arrived home in a state of mind similar to that of a man whose newly traded horse gives out in several joints just as he is driving in the lane and calling to his wife to come out and see how shrewd a trader her husband was. All horse-trading husbands would have their wives acknowledge that the other party to the trade was woefully cheated. But my Bible trade was worse; I did



not dare to call Mother to witness my acquisition—at \$2.50. The only confidant I could hope for in this case was my brother, two years older. Out to the barn, where he was at work, I took the red, full-gilt Bible and showed it to him. He liked it prodigiously and was jealous that he had not been equally fortunate as to get to the village and secure one. I told him this was the only one of the kind I saw anyway, but that if he liked it so well I would let him take over the contract—sort of sublet the purchase—and own the Bible for keeps, since no figuring that I could do on my finances would let me out whole, especially if I considered *vendues* and picnics during the next five years.

And so the incident was closed. It was my first experience with the book business, it was a transaction in good faith by a man whose sincerity told in his teaching as directly as it moved him religiously.

## Chapter II.

---

### THE RELATION BETWEEN NECKTIES AND LITERATURE.



CAME from a "poor but honest still" family all the more marked for their gentility because devoid of wealth. I received a considerable education, including a college course.

My people were fond of literature and I breathed a rather bookish air from childhood. But yet etiquette and as much dressiness as means would allow were their strong forte. And while not unmindful of the value of learning, I leaned strongly (as all young men do) toward the habiliments which yield a good appearance.

It was therefore not unnatural for me, upon approaching maturity, to choose a vocation of which these things were a part. In spite of my education, I took to the gents' furnishing line from a sheer love of pretty neckties and gloves. Thus

was I launched in the world. My capital being meagre I took a partner, wherefore the firm of

ISAACS & WRIGHT

GENTS' FURNISHERS

AND

HABERDASHERS.

The firm of Isaacs & Wright, composed of Ishmael Isaacs and Joshua Wright, had existed for upwards of ten years to our mutual satisfaction. I was the junior member of the firm. We were engaged in the merchandizing of haberdashery and notions for "wimminish men."

Among our customers were a number of book agents, who, however, seldom bought anything. They were the *betes noires* of the business, especially to my fellow laborer and partner, Mr. Isaacs, whom I, however, always called by his Christian (I mean *first*) name, Ishmael; and he reciprocated the confidentiality of our relationship by calling me Joshua. Our intimacy never bred contempt as long as there was any profit in the business. Besides, Ishmael was really a good fellow. His only fault was a timidity of which I was never able to cure him, and which expressed itself in all kinds of whims as well as business undertakings. When-

ever a book agent called I manœuvred to have Ishmael wait on him, hoping by such contact with the outer world to wear off his timidity; and he invariably appealed the case to me, if indeed he did not hide behind the counter till the storm was past.

"Those fellows all talk in a gale," he said, "as if to blow your head off. I can't bear it. It carries me quite off my feet."

One day he said to me, "Joshua, tell you what I'll do. If you will take charge of the book agents I will oversee the customers who come in just to look into the mirror."

"It's a bargain," said I; for I had an inward respect for the book agent who at worst was only a disguised drummer, while I did have a perfect loathing for the talking monkeys who came in pants because they were hairless. The sight of one always "queered" me for half a day. I never had been able to see or touch a freak of human or animal kind without a chill; and if only a squint-eyed boy looked at me I crossed myself afresh. I, therefore, felt that Ishmael had done me a genuine favor.

What is everybody's business is nobody's; and now that I had particular charge of the book agents I set to thinking how I might, by a mere contrivance, mitigate the pest so that Ishmael would do most of the work while I had a good time. I had

just hung out a sign :

“No beggars, peddlers, drummers  
or book agents allowed”

when in walked a raw-boned Irishman with a large satchel. I was in the rear of the store at the time.

“What have you got?” inquired Ishmael.

“Dynamite!”

“Dynamite! We don’t want any dynamite. Joshua!” he shouted.

“Shure, all I want ye to do is to look at it,” and proceeded to open the satchel, while Ishmael came running to me in huge bounds and almost fell over me in a faint, ejaculating, “Ach Gott! Ach Gott!” (In all emergencies he reverted to the German tongue.) The man hesitated for a moment, then advanced full upon us with open satchel, while Ishmael dropped into the cellar. As the dynamiter came near I arose and genially bade him good morning and inquired, “What kind of dynamite do you carry?”

“Intellectual dynamite, sir.”

He thereupon showed me his books and filled the whole store with a loud voice and “a deal of stinking breath,” as the ancient philosopher would have said.

"Ishmael!" I shouted. "Come up; there's one of your mirror pigeons up front!"

"Is he gone?" he inquired.

"Who?"

"The dynamiter."

"No. He's only a book agent. Come up!"

Whereupon Ishmael timidly peeped, and, seeing the literary merchandise, was reassured and proceeded to engage his customer who, however, took one look into the mirror on the show case and walked out.

Turning to the Irishman I told him that I should buy his books had I not, but yesterday, purchased a whole library.

"Shure an' then you'll need duplicat copies. It's all the shtyle now."

"Exactly so. The contract read for duplicates of all the readable books. So you see I am supplied. And, by the way, didn't you notice my sign outside, that no book agents were allowed here?"

"Faith an' I did that. An' seein' as how you wuz trying to frighten me I thought I would give ye a fit meself."

I laughed and he laughed till everything in the store shook, except Ishmael, who was still too pale to see the joke. Pale people can't see jokes.

When Pat had gone Ishmael and I talked things over.

"That sign seems to have made things worse," he said.

"It does seem so," said I, and again set to laughing, at which Ishmael got quite angry.

"Nothing to laugh at," he said sullenly. "Business is killing bad and then to be frightened off the earth by such people and have to see customers get away without being waited on."

"Very true, very true, Ishmael," said I. "But that man is the only one of his kind on the earth. After all I cannot but admire him. He belongs to the heroic age. What a contrast between him and your human clothes-horses!"

"Yes, Joshua, but they are the only horses that will carry *us*."

While I was at work on a new sign to ward off "agentiferous vermin," as Ishmael called them, in comes a little man just above "knee-high to a grasshopper" in size, nattily attired, wearing a silk tile which almost doubled his height, and shakes Ishmael by the hand, as if they had been friends from cradlehood. Said he, "Have you heard of it? Have you heard of it? Ha! Ha! Ha! Well, now, it's great. What? No? Well, now. Ha! Ha! Ha! It's the greatest thing you ever heard of."

Ishmael, quite out of breath from the hand shaking, at last managed to inquire what it was.

"Well, say now, it's great, ha! ha! ha! Let me tell you." And with that he reached into the consciousness of his inner top-coat pocket and pulled out a book prospectus, and began to show it as Ishmael called for me.

I joined them and our combined efforts could not dislodge him in less than half an hour.

When the agent had gone, Ishmael said, "What's to be done?"

Biting my tongue to repress laughter which I feared might explode the firm, I presently was able to remark that my new sign was nearly done. When I hung it up it simply read:

"Book Agents Welcomed!"

Seating myself at the front window I watched for the approach of the next book agent to see how he should take it. But a short vigil disclosed to me the fact that almost every passer-by, especially those with parcels, including a few book agents, viewed the sign with considerable interest, much to my amusement; and, as the book agents in particular seemed suspicious enough to skip our door, I regarded my new sign in the light of a perfect success, and retired to the enjoyment of my well-



earned ease, while Ishmael waited on the customers. Nor was he overburdened with waiting, except for customers; and thus our peace was undisturbed by envy on his part. On the contrary our friendship grew warmer, for we now had time to discuss a hobby which had been rocking softly in Ishmael's breast for many moons.

Ever since the visit, during my absence, of a peddler of genealogies, my partner was daft on his pedigree. Indeed, he bought the thing for \$75. But this made-to-order genealogy not fitting his career in all parts, from Adam down, he was tinkering at it upon every opportunity. His penchant was a complete genealogical tree of the Isaacs family. On numerous occasions had he broached the subject to me, but I always evaded him on the plea of having business to attend to; while now, in the long intermissions between customers, and the total allayment of book agents, I rather welcomed the stupendous inquiry of where and for how long Ishmael had been climbing down that tree. And greatly to my delight, the moment I gave audience he climbed up his tree with the agility of a squirrel, and took me with him in a vision past kings, prelates, potentates, prophets and patriarchs who made obeisance unto him as on we swept. The grandeur of Ishmael Isaacs' descent was far trans-

cendant over sons and daughters of revolution, eclipsing even the English peerage and the progeny of the kings of Ireland.

Presently we sat together on a solitary limb this side the flood, where he now asked my help to boost him over it. I looked across the dismal waters with a shiver in the blood, and remarked, "What profiteth? If you take that leap I shall be partnerless, for none have ever returned who ventured over its bourne."

But so intent was he upon reaching the antediluvian side and run his course clear on to Adam, that only my ejaculation "Pigeons!" awoke him to his real surroundings. He came off the tree at a single slide, half jump, half climb. I resolved never to go treeing with him again and retired to the rear of the store once more.

Days of supernal ease made me long for a vacation, which Ishmael readily consented to, and I accordingly set out on a trip, which, at his suggestion (the business not requiring my help) was prolonged into a desultory tour of several moons.

When I returned I was a changed man. I had contracted an itch of the mind; where, I could not tell, nor how. Continued dullness of trade, together with the inaccessibility of my ailment, aggravated the irritation until, as a last resort, I suggested

that, for once in ten years, it might be a good idea to "take stock." Ishmael as usual agreed, and for one whole week the store was filled with dust so thick that no customer would enter farther than the length of his nose. A few old friends who had unlimited credit with us, which they never abused by even a partial liquidation, came in to inquire anxiously if we were going to move.

Our account of stock showed as follows on the basis of calling our capital invested 100 per cent:

(1) Consumed by dry rot (goods unsalable on account of age and decrepitude of style) . . . . .	35 %
(2) Eaten by live rot (goods sold, delivered and never paid for) . . . . .	20 %
(3) Ladies' hoops, inconvertible into bustles (of which Ishmael was determined to have a large stock when we took over the business from our wiser predecessor) . . . . .	25 %
(4) <i>En passe</i> goods which had refused to pass on to customers . . . . .	35 %
<hr/>	
Total impairment . . . . .	115 %

and still the shelves were full.

We kept on figuring over this situation for six weeks, during which Ishmael sometimes glanced at his genealogical tree, and I scratched the roof of my mind till I was bald from the front horizon well up to the zenith

A consultation disclosed to us the fact that ever since we had meddled with those signs our business had been almost nil, and by unanimous consent we now obliterated them and reduced them literally to litters; and in about a week the first book agent again graced our presence.

He came in under the pretense of peddling phosphorus. So cleverly did he introduce his subject that even I was for a moment mystified; and Ishmael cast anxious glances toward the cellar, as if he feared it was some new explosive. I listened to him with the same delight I felt in boyhood days when the bluebirds came to sing again after a long and dreary winter; I trusted he might prove the "first harbinger" of a spring in our ice-bound trade.

He soused me in Shakespeare clear up to my ears, and went away happy with an order. I bought the books "just for good luck," and I knew the agent took the order in the same spirit.

From that time on book agents were again numerous and quite a few customers were sandwiched in between their visits. Nothing succeeds like suc-

cess. Where people see others enter, they also will go in.

And thus we were happy again except for the two facts that I was getting balder still and that our capital remained unrepaired. The latter having stood it for years—possibly ever since I went into business with Ishmael (I could not tell)—I felt I could endure longer. But the former trouble cried for an early issue.

All the doctors agreed that I must have become infected with the virus of a delusion, possibly the result of an illusion or other sub-conscious vision. Their unanimous dictum was that I must uncoop myself and cease from every business worry.

In this dilemma I subjected myself to an X-ray introspection. What I discovered will be found related henceward.

During my vacation I had done some thinking. Consequently at the first opportunity I adverted to Ishmael's family tree and gained his instant audience. At first contact with the problem of his descent by a family tree I had been unconscious of its logical denouement. Now a thought flashed through my mind: "Was Adam a Jew?" I inquired aloud. "Was Adam a Jew?" echoed Ishmael. "Of course he was."

I saw instantly what this meant. Those who

were not Jews were a fatherless race. "Do you mean to monopolize the father of the human race?" I asked seriously, with not a little heat.

"Well, how can I help it?" was his reply.

For the first time since our business relations I saw Ishmael in the light of a grasping Jew. He had Adam and was going to keep him. I felt a void in my own make-up: Ishmael had robbed me. The benefits of the many sharp bargains he made for our firm now were all forgotten: Ishmael was a mean greedy fellow.

In this frame of mind I said to him, "Mr. Isaacs, what will you take for your share of the business?"

"You want to buy me out?" he inquired. "Yes?—Ten thousand dollars."

"And what will you give me for my share?" I asked, after a moment's thought.

"Three thousand dollars," was the prompt reply.

"Split the difference," said I, "and I'll go you."

"Split the difference? There is no difference to split," said he.

"Very well," said I, "make it three thousand cash and it's a bargain."

Ishmael had during our partnership saved three thousand dollars by the most frugal living, which was his reason for naming me that figure.

I had saved no money, being inclined to "good

times" and "good living," and now left the business with every dollar that had ever been saved out of it. I was poorer only in the loss of Adam, but which was the result really of a *theft* committed by an *agent* of pedigrees—Ishmael being *particeps criminis* only after the fact.

In this way did I leave Ishmael and the haberdashery business.

I now had time for the health outing recommended by my physicians.

In the heat of passion fomented by our bargaining over the business and the loss of Adam I forgot myself to the extent of calling Ishmael a *Jew*.

"So are you a Jew," he replied calmly. "In business every Christian becomes a Jew. You belong to the ten tribes who lost themselves and were called Christians. I belong to one of the two tribes who have always found themselves. You are a Jew for not paying me ten thousand. I am one for not paying you more than three thousand."

"Ishmael," said I, "your distinction is worth the difference; pay me the three thousand, and let us part in peace."

We shook hands in good fellowship.

"What will you do now?" he inquired.

"I intend to become a book agent," I replied.

"A book agent! Ach Gott! Well, if you ever need ten dollars and I have it, it shall be yours."

"Thank you, Ishmael! Thank you! You are good at heart."

"Vell, is not that the only place to be good? I was born a Jew, you a Christian; you couldn't help it. It is all right; we are friends. Our hearts have beat as one for ten long years. Mine shall ever so beat."

"And so shall mine, Ishmael. I wish you all success and if ever you need ten thousand dollars and I have it, it shall be yours for the asking."

"Thank you, Joshua. It is worth ten thousand to hear you say it." And thus we parted.



## Chapter III.

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### WHY I BECAME A BOOK AGENT.



**I** WAS brought up in the way I should go and have generally walked therein. I state this simply as a tribute to my parents, not in a sense of egotism or self-sufficement. I have, however, not always walked; yet when the log of my career shall be squared with the broadaxe of Time, I trust a reasonably straight beam may remain and one large enough to get into the eye.

From my youth I was, like Cæsar, ambitious. This ambition was imbibed from various books which agents had sold to our family, and I still believe that if certain things could be made to transpire, I should become a great man.

There are many people to whom things happen; but all you, gentle reader, will care to know, is why I became a book agent. For a number of years I

pursued the even tenor of my way (very even), like other millions of men whose history is a wide prairie of time unrelieved by any but the smallest undulations of income and habit. The course of this sameness of life becomes chronic and remains unaltered unless the personality of some woman crosses the mind's horizon and hypnotizes it. Ninety-eight per cent. of the male population are subject to feminine hypnotism. There was a woman in my case. Where I had seen her, whether in city or country, suburb or watering place, I could not now remember, but one day I found impressed upon the retina of my soul the image of a being so seraphic that no rest was longer mine until I found her. The difficulty was that I had not the least idea of her whereabouts, and in order to find her I abandoned my business and resolved to enter upon a roving life, going from place to place and from door to door if necessary, trusting that at some auspicious moment we should meet face to face and instantly recognize our mutual sweet affinities; for I never could think but that she, whoever and wherever she might be, must by the same token be waiting my arrival with an ardor equal to my own and possibly greater.

I would not here tell you, gentle reader, how long and how arduous was my quest, lest unhappily my

experience should discourage some simple earnest swain and deter him from pursuing the phantom of his bliss. (Bliss is all right, providing you can catch more than the phantom of it.)

She was my ideal woman; she existed, for I had seen her. No art ever portrayed a picture equal to that mystic portrait on my heart. She had an angel's face with the gladness of life. Her form was the acme of grace. She was the embodiment of Face, Grace and Charity.

While still brooding in our haberdashery store, I considered every avocation with a view to attaining the freedom necessary to pursue her and found only one that answered all the requirements—the book agency business. A man will do anything for the woman he loves. Therefore I know you will excuse me for this choice of occupation; for I would have you know I was a gentleman. That is to say, I was a man and I was gentle. Not all gentlemen are gentle, a fact which any book agent can make affidavit to. Moreover, in these days any man who can crease his pants is a gentleman.

Come with me, gentle reader, and share the trials and vicissitudes of my quest, and if happily we find her, also the aroma of my joys.

But ere we go, think upon what is now beheld to you and know that you are in good company. Only

good great men ever can become book agents. Witness this noble list:

DISTINGUISHED BOOK AGENTS.

Napoleon Bonaparte, when a poor lieutenant, took the agency of a book entitled "L'Histoire de la Revolution."

George Washington, when young, canvassed around Alexandria, Va., and sold over two hundred copies of a work entitled "Bydell's American Savage."

Mark Twain was a book agent.

Longfellow sold books by subscription.

Jay Gould when starting in life was a canvasser.

Daniel Webster paid his second term of tuition at Dartmouth by handling De Tocqueville's "America," in Merrimack, N. H.

General Grant canvassed for Irving's "Columbus."

Abraham Lincoln was a peddler for a short time. Would have been a book agent but for the scarcity of books.

## Chapter IV.

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### THE BEGINNING OF MYSTERY.



HOEVER will take the trouble to look back through the files of the daily papers will find in the "Personal Columns" the following advertisement, day after day for several months during the summer of 1893.

"IF THE BOOK AGENT who on May 13, 1893, sold me a copy of 'The Anatomy of Melancholy' will at once call on, or communicate with, the undersigned, he will find it greatly to his advantage. Important.

"Wilkins Hopkinson, 55 Wall St., New York."

Those who read this notice were completely mystified by its terms. Occasionally the advertisement appeared under the heading "Male Help Wanted," as "Agents—If the Book Agent," etc., etc. But in neither position did it receive more attention than was prompted by curiosity or ridicule, for the book agents who read it regarded it as a hoax to be given a wide berth. Only one man took an interest in

that advertisement. Day by day he read it over just to assure himself that it still appeared; for on its answer solely depended the largest issue he ever had at stake.

Several replies came to hand, but they were either inquiries regarding the portent of the advertisement, or anonymous communications, evidently from book agents who took the advertisement for a joke and answered as they considered, "in kind." One man wrote a jocular diatribe on melancholy, ending with a finis-piece of skull and crossbones—a missive of grim humor which to Wilkins Hopkinson seemed the irony of fate itself and made him shudder although he affected to smile thereat. Here is the letter:

"New York, July 32, 1893.

"MR. WILKINS HOPKINSON,  
55 Wall Street,  
New York.

"DEAR SIR:

"Replying to your Ad. in the Herald, I think I am the man you are looking for. I have much melancholy for sale and have at times parted with pieces of it to gulls. You are evidently one of my victims. Melancholy is made to sell. My friend, part with yours at any price. To one not accus-

tomed to the handling of melancholy, it brings great woe. Better have an epidemic of lockjaw in your family than melancholy. Melancholy produces an irritation of the diaphragm whereat no doctor can get to cure it, and as soon as it becometh chronic, jail, heaven or hell are all the same to you. Your intellect will become tasteless. You will browse upon the world's good with less discrimination of joy than did Balaam's ass (one of the sacred characters of Scripture) on the herbs of Palestine.

"The diaphragm cuts the body into two hemispheres and if it be infested with melancholy, both the upper and lower man are vitiated and cut up, wherein consists the *anatomy* of melancholy. Symptoms:

"First the bowels lose their compassion and then the brain flushes itself into water, which would be indicated by the shedding of flabulates such as your advertisement.

"Send me your anatomy of melancholy forthwith and all shall yet be well.

"Affectionately yours,

"MAX BLOSEBALK, 9th Ave. & B'way."

Hopkinson's predicament was altogether unique. The one man whose testimony could save him from the terrible consequences impending had vanished.

He was nowhere to be found. Neither letters nor advertisements attracted his attention.

On the date stated I had a singularly happy interview with the said Wilkins Hopkinson, who was a lawyer by profession and a financial promoter and stock broker by practice.

I had nothing to do with his unhappy fate. After trying in vain to sell him the books for which I was at the time agent, I finally got his order for "The Anatomy of Melancholy," an ancient volume of forgotten lore, on a bet by him that no such book existed. Mr. Hopkinson was in many respects a man of honor, and by paying the bet became the possessor of an extraordinary book.

Our interview was interrupted by the visit of a little woman dressed in black, closely veiled. Although Mr. Hopkinson took her to an inner room and closed the door, I could hear that her visit was even more unwelcome than the book agent's usually is. She raved and wept alternately and Mr. Hopkinson adapted thereto threats and consolations. What it was all about I did not know nor care, and I should never have mentioned the occurrence but for the events which followed—events of the greatest moment to Mr. Hopkinson and later of more than passing interest to myself.

So well did Mr. Hopkinson like his book that he



regarded me as a friend, for he wrote me a note scarcely a week later, telling me so and asking me to come and see him again; and being in the vicinity of his office the following day, I made him the requested call.

He was in a most jovial mood and indulged in many pleasantries with me. Finally he insisted that I should accept the hospitalities of his home that evening and with him discuss the mysteries of melancholy, for his family were away and he desired company.

A month later I left New York for a summer's peregrination among the rustic and suburban people who during the warm weather are supposed to be more susceptible to the wiles of the intellectual missionary than are the city folk, who even in winter are often hot in the choler under canvass; and during the summer weather they assume to choke at the least bite of mental pabulum.

But more especially was I in search of her whose mystic spell was ever over me.

I went to all the summer resorts and watering places, hoping to catch another glimpse of her. Into each face I gazed with deep intent to see her likeness in it. I even scanned the face of every man, trusting perchance to see some trace of blood relationship in a father or a brother of her.

I thought no more of Mr. Hopkinson except occasionally to remember him as one of a number of gentlemen whose hospitalities were a happy recollection to me.

## Chapter V.

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### INITIATION.

**D**OUBTLESS every gentle reader has at some time in his life observed the advertisements of the publishers who take out a guaranty of sales by employing agents to sell their books. Now a book sold by an agent is presently, absolutely and irrevocably sold; he does not put it on his shelves and promise to remit in an indefinite time.

It is quite natural then that for such virile services the publisher should pay handsomely.

Being in the beforesaid mood and quest, and having decided that only the book agency business offered me the required facilities, nothing could have pleased me better than to read the following ad. in a morning paper:

“AGENTS: We have the King-Pin money maker,  
\$50.00 a week guaranteed. B. B. & Co.,” etc.

Now there are a few men who are being paid less than \$50 a week for their services (but who presumably would not sell books). Under the cir-

cumstances, having a large surplus of leisure on hand, I was willing to accept \$50 per week "to start," although from the stock of ability which it will be noticed I must have accumulated, I should have had greater compensation. However, I called upon the advertisers and had comparatively no difficulty in securing from them the following contract:

"WHEREAS, Joshua Wright, Esquire, party of the first part, offers for sale a substance composed of equal parts of leisure, tongue oil and sole leather; and

"WHEREAS, Messrs. Brumbach, Bauersox & Co., parties of the second part, are in want of the said compound to grease the ways of launching a certain book ('The Scenic Wonders of the World'), of which they are the publishers.

"Now, THEREFORE, it is mutually agreed that the said party of the first part is to receive from the said party of the second part the sum of \$50 per week for delivering the said compound in the shape of twenty-five orders per week for 'The Scenic Wonders of the World'; and for every order in excess of twenty-five per week the said Wright is to receive a bonus of \$2 each.

"In case less than twenty-five orders per week are taken by the said Wright, the deficiency shall be accounted for in experience.

"IT IS FURTHER AGREED that any variation of this contract shall be subject to arbitration.

"Witness our hands this 1st day of April, 1893.

"(Signed) JOSHUA WRIGHT,

"(Signed) BRUMBACH, BAUERSOX & Co."

I was told the title alone would sell the book. There is much in a title, especially if you stumble upon another fellow's title.

Again the argument was all on my side. To see the sights which my book afforded views of would cost a fortune in railroad fares. Hence I was saving people the difference and would be welcomed as a benefactor. Here I had a double-edged blade of benefaction. With the sample under my arm, I walked complacently into a store. I had hardly got inside the door when I heard a chorus of voices, "No books!" I investigated the source of this emanation but could not discover it; every one below the office boy down to the head of the firm was in a fit of business intensity. I tried to explain that I had urgent and beneficent business with them. As I approached them severally they each had a peculiar wave of the hand—it wasn't palsy. The office boy smiled as much as to say, "I told you so." (He had offered to advise me when I came in.) Thinking it was a peculiar office I left.

In the next place I opened up my theme at once. "I came to show you a new——" "No, you didn't. We don't buy books here—— Good day." And of course I left there.

The third office was now entered. I said to one of the firm: "Brumbach, Bauersox & Co. sent me to pay you (here he listened attentively) a visit, with their new book." "Sorry, but I just bought one last week." Now that was a pity to miss an order by only a week. Meantime the others in the place had overheard our conversation, and one gentleman had to go upstairs at once, another downstairs, while a third saw some pressing duties at the rear of the store. I went to the cashier's window and peeped in and just saw him dodge under the desk, while the junior clerks were hunting for the missing link in the trial balance and could not be humanely disturbed.

I never before knew that the human animal had such peculiar habits. When I reflected how coldly I sometimes had received book agents you can imagine how penitent I was. A feeling of isolation came over me.

At the next door an intellectual functionary told me that canvassers were not allowed. "Yes, they are. I am."—"You will have to excuse us," he said in a falsetto voice.

It began to dawn upon me that there might be some "deficiency" to be accounted for in "experience" and I went back to Brumbach, Bauersox & Co. to get an interpretation of that portion of the contract and ascertain the approximate amount.

"Don't worry about that," they said. "Never cross a bridge until you come to it. Cleveland said that to the silver men and he became President of the United States. You are doing finely. We have known men to go a whole day without taking an order. The next day they make up for it."

They gave me some new hints.

I went at it again, but I had the same continued difficulty of securing a proper adjacency of person. Many people would not see me at all. In numerous instances they had a sign on the door—"Beggars, Peddlers and Canvassers not admitted."

I returned to the publishers for light on this point. They replied: "Those are just the offices where they will buy, as few book agents enter there."

I went back and tried it.

"Here is a new book," said I upon entering, "that I know will interest you." "Can't you read?" "Yes, sir, or I would not be an educational missionary," I replied. "But that sign——" "But you don't

mean to——” “We do, decidedly——” I departed orderless.

I went home to reflect upon the philosophy of book canvassing.

The next day my experiences were the same, only towards the close I got so timid that I didn't let go of the door knob and anticipated “No books,” and got right out again. I killed a great amount of territory. Towards evening I called upon Brumbach, Bauersox & Co. and told them that if they would pay me two-sixths of the contract price per week, I would consider us even; but this they declined to do. I was in \$16.666 of experience and quit. I told them I was too refined a man to sell books.

In a few days I noticed another publisher's advertisements. Calling upon him, he told me that he did not make any contracts. “We will pay you all you earn, so much per order upon delivery of books. I am afraid, however, that you are not cut out for a book agent,” he said. I involuntarily nodded assent; I felt I was a misfit. But his telling me so made me mad. “If you will give me a prospectus, I'll show you,” said I.

I took the sample home and studied it carefully.

The next morning found me on the warpath early. But human nature had not changed over night.



The propinquity was constantly missing. But I was determined to succeed by reason of my higher mission.

After many failures in the business district, I thought I would try private house canvassing, and the next morning at ten o'clock I rang the bell of a handsome brownstone front. I handed the servant my card and was ushered into the reception room. Mrs. Oldspice would be "right down." Minutes dragged themselves into an hour of waiting. Finally Mrs. O. appeared in all her glory. She had gone into full dress to receive the book agent. After my experiences downtown, I expected to be frozen into a statue when she knew the object of my visit. But she was very glad to see me. It was a fine book, she said. I told her that Mrs. Van Buzzard and Mrs. Jollywood had bought the book (as I had been informed). "Oh, they buy such inferior works," she said. "No, I shall not want it. I have a similar work which is much handsomer." Thinking she was now repaying my intrusion I apologized for making her to dress to receive the book agent. This precipitated matters. "I am always dressed," she replied, and was kind enough to lead the way to the door.

I then entered a respectable flat house, and going upstairs saw an open door which I entered rapping.

I found myself in the private hall opposite the kitchen door and there, kneeling on the floor, was a woman scrubbing.

"What do you want?" she inquired.

"I want to see the lady of the house."

"I am the lady of the house," she said, as she straightened herself up defiantly on her knees.

I had "put my foot into it" again. "The lady of the house scrubbing! Ye gods!" I thought; but recovering from the revelation, I said, "Your husband ought to be thankful to have so thrifty a wife."

"Oh, thank you, but he isn't. I wish I had him here now."

"Well, I'll tell you what I came for. I have a new book that will delight you."

"If I had money to buy books, do you think I would be scrubbing this floor?"

"Oh, yes, you might; many people in that way save the necessary wherewith to buy books."

"Well, I won't."

I bade her good morning.

Where would I go next? The world was shut against me. My welcome was frost-bitten everywhere. My new ladder to success had all the lower rungs knocked out of it by general public "cussedness." I couldn't even get a hold on it.

As I walked the streets dejectedly without courage enough to look at another house, I finally came to a crossing and hesitated with a fearful hesitation which way to turn. I stopped and gazed vacantly into space.

As I was standing there, a middle-aged gentleman with a cheery twinkle in his eye and of a business-like appearance came up to me and said: "Young man, what are you selling?"

"I am not selling anything," I replied.

"Beg pardon, I took you for a book agent."

"How did you guess?"

"Well, I knew. You are a typical agent," he said.

"Your sarcasm is typically good. Do you charge for it?"

"No sarcasm was intended, I assure you. Been long in the business?"

"Long enough to know that I can't stay in it."

"Come on, don't be discouraged. It is hard work unless you know how. Would you like me to teach you? I can sell books. Look here," and he showed me a number of orders and the day was still young.

"You are very kind, I confess. But why would you teach me, a stranger? Anyway, my case is hopeless."

"Candidly, you'll make a good book agent. I am always glad to do a fellow a good turn. Come to

my home to-night, No. — West — St., and I'll put you in the way of making money."

I had heard of angels met unawares, but I was suspicious the man had an "ax to grind." Nevertheless, I went to see him. That evening we had a long talk, during which he got the bulk of my history up to date.

"Now," said he, "I am a mind reader. When I saw you I knew you were in mental distress, and I never refuse help or at least encouragement. A good word costs nothing and it makes a fellow feel good to say it." The man charmed me with his sweetness of soul. I had learned in the past week that book agents were despised, if not hated, and here was a veritable saint a book agent. What a strange contradiction!

"As I told you," he continued, "I am a mind reader and a hypnotist. With this power I have made a small fortune in the business, and seeing that you are of the right build morally and mentally I offer to put you in the possession of this power. You are young yet. I can also see that you are honest and will not abuse it. I'll tell you now that if you ever do, it will leave you as suddenly as it came to you. It is a highly moral quality.

"The house you are with now is a good one. Better than the first one.

"But before I give you the hypnotic faculty you must try for another day with your present equipment. To-morrow night, if you will come here again, I will bestow upon you a blessing that will go with you all through life, in any vocation, and it is not impossible that you may achieve fame as well as fortune."

So good did I feel next day that I actually got one order after tramping all day for it and meanwhile getting the most blustering rebuff of all, so far. It was in a lawyer's office.

"What do you want in here?" was his cheerful greeting. I don't like blizzards and quit, little thinking that I should have my revenge later. Many lawyers suffer from torts and are prone to retorts.

One disadvantage of the book business, anyway, is that being unacquainted with the domestic habits of the fowl you're after, you never know until too late if a man has indigestion or one of his bilious fits, or had a quarrel with his wife. It is very much like treading on a rattler unawares. The retaliation is swift and fearful. Or, if a man has been hatching lunacy for some time, your visit may bring it to a head and cause him to break loose in violence. There are such people, though happily they be scarce. Should you find them, discretion is the

better part of valor. Not even hypnotism will shield against incipient lunacy.

That night I told Prof. Von Offenbar (for that was the man's name) all that had occurred during the day, including the occurrence of the order.

He was glad to hear this report, and my heart ticked like a Waterbury watch in anticipation of his revelation.

"It may seem strange that I should take this unusual interest in you," he said, "but I have two reasons for doing so. Nearly every man has at some time tried to sell books and nearly all of them have failed, but in their bungling experimenting they have brought the profession into disrepute. Nearly all people seem to think that the only men who sell books are those who have failed in every other vocation. In fact, they will tell you they know so, because they have tried it. The facts are the reverse. All the men who cannot sell books have drifted into other walks of life and in those their efforts are crowned with ninety-five per cent. of failure. The remaining five per cent. are men who once sold books. I know you will vindicate the profession, as I have done, and demonstrate that you have the necessary statesmanship to sell books, which only two out of every thousand men can do.

The other reason I have already stated to you: I want to be helpful to you.

"And now I must ask of you a specific condition of mind. You must have in your heart a feeling of sympathy for all mankind."

"That," I replied, "is a difficult stipulation. My feeling toward the populace is that of the boy who caught the mule's hind legs just as he was throwing them away. It saved the mule but it hurt the boy."

"Well, then, let us take it seriously," said he. "And there have been occasions when the tables were turned. Did you ever hear the story of Hobson and the book agent? It was this way: Hopewell Hobson, a New York merchant, residing in Newark, was thinking all day what he should take home that night for his wife's birthday gift. He was in this frame of mind when Jack Smartley, the book agent, called. On every previous occasion, Mr. Hobson had been extremely unsympathetic. Jack was surprised to find a welcome now. 'What have you to-day?' inquired Hobson kindly. 'Just what you want, I believe,' replied Jack. 'Let me show it to you.'

"It was not many minutes before Hobson was the owner of 'The Early Christian Martyrs.' Then recovering, he apologized by telling that his wife was

of a religious turn of mind and he wanted the book for her. Hobson, with a twinge of remorse for his former harsh treatment of the literary missionary, unconsciously tried to atone by indulging in a friendly chat with Jack, who, however, shortly begged to be excused and went away with some incidental information.

"About an hour later, there was a tug at the Hobson door bell in Newark. Mr. Smartley entered and began to explain the occasion of his visit. 'I have just called upon Mr. Hobson,' said Jack, 'in his New York office. He was greatly interested in a book I have here and said it only needed your consent to place the book in your possession. Of the "Early Christian Martyrs" it is only necessary to say that without such literature the sectarian relations would lapse into a detrimental communism of unity. Then the illustrations are cheerful and make one happy to recollect that he got himself born in the nineteenth century. Shall I leave you one of the books? It is only \$6, and Mr. Hobson might like to read it himself.'

"Mrs. Hobson, flushed with the hope of a new religious awakening in her husband (who had lost the most distinguishing religious qualities), bought the book.



"Jack Smartley concluded to canvass for the remainder of the day in Newark.

"Mr. Hobson returned home half an hour early with a package under his arm. His wife embraced him lovingly at the door. 'Here,' said he, 'is a little remembrance for your birthday.'

"She gave him another hug with a kiss and a 'Thank you, dear, You are so thoughtful.'

"Mr. Hobson ate unusually heartily. He felt he had done well, had pleased his wife, and made the domestic atmosphere calm and bright.

"It was in the fall. The weather was still warm. It was after dinner. Mrs. Hobson opened her parcel. 'I am sorry,' she said, 'but I just bought the same book to-day.'

"Mr. Hobson felt the heat of his dinner and went to the front window for air. He gazed vacantly out upon the pavement. Suddenly he called out, 'Hey there! I say——'

"Jack Smartley was hastening down the pavement to catch the next train for New York, and Mr. Hobson's calls were addressed to him. He did not hear.

"The next moment Ezra Jones, Hobson's near neighbor, passed by in the same direction. 'Jones, will you call that man just ahead of you there? I want to see him.'

“‘Certainly.’

“Just then Smartley looked at his watch and saw he had to hurry for the train. He was climbing the steps of the car when Jones overtook him.

“‘I say,’ said Jones, ‘Hobson, uptown, wants to see you.’

“‘Hobson? Hobson? What Hobson? Oh, yes, I *know*; he has ordered a copy of “The Early Christian Martyrs.” Here, *take* it. Six dollars, please,’ as he handed down the book and took Jones’ money.

“Jones, glad to accommodate so esteemed a neighbor, returned to Hobson, in triumph. ‘I just barely caught him. He said he knew what you wanted, and here it is.’

“Mr. Hobson was too full for utterance. He forgot even to thank Jones. He had a choice of books (thus originated the saying ‘Hobson’s choice’), and notwithstanding the religious tone of the work, Mr. Hobson has ever since involuntarily manifested the same aversion for book agents that a peccary has for snakes. Strange, isn’t it? And now, whenever a book agent wants to do another a favor he tells him that Mr. Hobson wants a copy of the ‘Early Christian Martyrs.’

“Now, this man was smart—*too* smart. If he had got into a railway management, he would have run away with the whole railroad, ties and all; and left

every employee and stockholder of it too poor to buy books. Such men discourage the sale of books and bonds."

I began to surmise that my would-be benefactor was "jollyng me along" with good stories.

"And as to the use of hypnotism?" I said.

"We are coming to that directly," he replied. "But as I remarked, the possibility of your acquiring this power depends upon your mental state—a peaceful receptivity. Besides a man wants to be strong on his legs to receive it. After thinking the matter over I am of the opinion that you will have to take more physical exercise and accumulate greater staying power in the calves of your legs. This will come to you incidentally while looking for orders. So my advice to you is to canvass another week with your present outfit."

I shuddered.

"I know it's hard," he said, "but so important a calling as book canvassing cannot be entered upon without its corresponding initiatories. Man is fearfully and wonderfully made, and one of his peculiarities is that the efficacy of the mind is largely determined by the firmness of the underpinning.

"Come and see me again, this night a week hence, and meanwhile take all the orders you can, and do not hesitate to walk long distances or to climb

stairs. The latter exercise is particularly beneficial."

I went away disappointed, but the professor's charming personality took away every misgiving as I thought of him, and during the next week I pursued the uneven tenor of my way assiduously.

Can a man be too good? A characteristic incident was the following: I called upon a Mr. Heartfelt, who received me most kindly. He did not rise from his office chair, nevertheless extended his hand of welcome and shook mine at a highly fashionable angle. "My dear sir, you want to sell me a book, don't you?" he said. I confessed. He continued, "Well, I can't buy, but I wish I could canvass books as you can—I'd do it in a minute, but I'm too sensitive. I could not stand the rebuffs you get—it would kill me."

I hadn't said a word about the book or shown the sample. I took his sympathetic words home and that evening analyzed them. I found the net residuum was, "Your hide is thick enough to sell books." This was "the most unkindest cut of all." And so men will speed you on your way, rejoicing. And this man was honest and sincere. I do not think he meant to hurt my feelings.

Then it occurred to me that I might do better in the country and went the way of the commuter. I

never saw people so pleased with my pictures (illustrations). They seemed to pant for them as the hart does for the waterbrook. And they all said they would buy if they could, and some of them did anyway. Their common objection was that as my book looked exciting, it would be a hurtful acquisition, as their habits of train watching had developed involuntary palpitation of the heart. I was truly sorry for every one who had to decline my offer.

I spent the day very pleasantly until I came to a place where they had a dog loose. He seemed to welcome me, however, and I paid no attention to him as I rang the bell. While I was pulling the bell he came up behind me and pulled my leg. But what surprised me still more was that he could not bring home his jaws. I pitied him. There he had a piece of fresh meat in his mouth and couldn't eat it. I examined him and found the animal apparently vigorous but concluded his looks were deceiving, and that he must be so full of age and malaria that he was completely enervated.

I told the occurrence to the lady of the house and she said it was strange; that he had always been an efficient watch-dog.

The week being up I called upon my benefactor. When I told him the above incident, he examined

my leg, and finding it unharmed, said I was now ready for hypnotism. That I was, in fact, in a state of incipient hypnotism when the animal tried to bite me.

What Prof. Von Offenbar revealed to me, I cannot, of course, just here relate, but I shall do so later. Sufficient to say for the present that that night he placed me in possession of a power which has ever since been the envy of all who know me. So remarkable was the whole transaction that I shall make a record of it for the benefit of posterity. But the professor would not let me go without the following lecture:

“Ninety-nine out of every hundred men are non-transactors. They help to transact or record the acts of other men. They are passive and act only as and when directed. If they have ideas they lack the courage to get out into pursuit of them. The book agent must be a transactor. His mind must be positive as a bar of steel which may bend but never break—must always ‘right’ itself to the one purpose. Such alone are the minds that achieve success in any industry, vocation or profession. Men lack nerve. Nerve is courage. The substitute, ‘brass,’ will be discovered and despised by almost everybody. Nerve is a hidden power whose workings men admire. The book agent must have nerve

and he must have an equal amount of true humility. He must have a profound respect for men whatever their station in life. He is their servant. But, by the positiveness of his purpose he is also their master. He must in his elements consist of courage and kindness. The former quality is admired; the latter beloved. And if he can add to these wit, 'the salt of wisdom,' everybody will enjoy his presence. Without a clear conception of these fundamentals and your absolute acceptance of them even hypnotism will not avail you. This is why I stipulated that you must be in sympathy with all mankind. Reflect on these things. Otherwise you will have to submit to the operation of trephining to gain a physical enlargement of the brain. For I am convinced from long observation of men in all vocations that unless the mind can fully grasp this idea, the brain either has too little room to disport itself freely or an entirely new outfit of cellular tissue of simpler texture would be an improvement."

"May I ask you a question, Professor?" said I.

"Yes, sir."

"Is trephining a dangerous operation?"

"No. Why?"

"I feel as if something had to be done."

"Well, at the most the opening of your sutures will serve every purpose."

"And what's that?"

"The sutures are the seams of the cranium. As soon as they are knitted together and seamed for good, the expansion of the brain is stopped.

"This is why most persons of middle age act as if they had a stiffness in the head. It's a feeling akin to that which comes from tight shoes; only a few people escape this cramping. Chauncey Depot is one of the few exceptions; his sutures are still open."

"Where can I find this man? I should like to interview him on this subject."

"His exact location I cannot tell you. One hears of his being here, there and everywhere, all over the country. So much so that by many people he is regarded as a mythical personage who lives on reputation only. But if you are determined to see him, you might go to the Grand Central Depot."




## Chapter VI.

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### A CHAPTER OF SELLING STORIES AND ESSAYS.

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#### MONOPOLIES.

ARMERS have an aversion to monopolies. Yet, if a monopoly has any benefits to bestow, they want them.

Finding the book business attended with too much physical exertion, but worse still, seeing how the poor farmers were suffering in the fields for the want of shade and other causes, it occurred to me that I might vouchsafe for myself an easier life and at the same time bestow on the farmer a greater boon than had yet been thrown to him since the dawn of agriculture, which I understand is quite as old a calling as engineering or physics.

I talked of my scheme to the farmers as occasion allowed and they all agreed it was a good idea. Accordingly I went and associated myself with several well-to-do farmers and formed "The National Sunshade and Irrigation Company," and proceeded to Trenton to get a charter, which was speedily granted us.

The purposes for which this company was organized were as follows, got out in a neat prospectus:

"WHEREAS, it has from time immemorial been known that farmers work in the sun and suffer without shade, and

"WHEREAS, the agricultural industry, which is at the root of all subsistence, is from time to time jeopardized by astronomical convolutions and spots on the sun which cause uncontrollable drought, inflicting losses of millions of dollars,

"BE IT KNOWN, that we, Joshua Wright, Silas Lopham, Solomon Woodchop, Israel Harvest and Josiah Cornhusk, have associated ourselves into 'The National Sunshade and Irrigation Company' for the purpose of supplying agricultural shade and artificial crop moisture to the entire agricultural world, beginning with the State of New Jersey.

"Any farmer giving us the permission will have his entire farm duly and ornamentally awned, so as to afford him and his co-laborers shade over their occupation, and in return for this privilege we will guarantee to sprinkle sunlight on his crops as required, from patent ball-nozzle sprinklers, at the minimum charge of ten cents per gallon.

"And we will likewise catch up all rain water as it falls, store it in overhead reservoirs and feed it

from pipes, mixed with electricity, phosphorus and oxygen, so that the water itself shall be the best artificial manure, at the rate of one (1) cent per cubic foot. And should the rainfall be deficient, we will agree to pump water from the Atlantic Ocean and feed it in similar manner at the same cost."

Not a farmer in New Jersey but wanted the new contrivance at once and we signed contracts faster than we could fill them although our capital stock was three billion dollars.

Here was a cinch for all eternity and you never saw me and us hustle as we did with this company.

Presently a politician came to see me. Said he, "You have a good thing, I learn, but you had better take the boys into it. All they want is some of the capital stock, say one-half of it. You can afford to do this and it will pay you."

"I guess not," I replied. "*My* mind gave birth to this noble, gigantic idea and I have all the help I want."

The very next day the "Trenton Howitzer" had a column and a half on me and my company, describing us as the arch-monopolists of all history. The coal monopoly was bad enough, but here was a concern which proposed to monopolize sunlight itself which should be and always was free as air. And also the whole water supply, as if farmers could not

do without these simple articles.

The press of the whole country took the scent like a pack of hounds after one lone jack-rabbit. I was overrun with reporters, so I could not get out the specifications for our plants.

The farmers everywhere wrote complaints to the papers, imploring salvation from this new impending monopoly.

When we came to fill our first contract, the farmers, led by Penn Dillman, a modern cyclops, met us with pitchforks, shovels and rakes, and one of them even got out the reaping machine and wanted to cut off our legs and maim us for life.

Well, to make a long story short, we gave it up, rather than cause civil war and manufacture a new generation of rural orphans and widows whose lives are already lonely enough.

But if the politicians had kept away in honesty, and the newspaper men had not been in dire need of a new sensation to enlarge their circulations, we should have succeeded and blessed the agricultural world for all future time.

I now went back to selling books and in this way got part of my revenge.

## COOKOOS.

Hon. Grover Cleveland, the most illustrious of our Ex-Presidents (the others being all deceased) was the discoverer of the political cuckoo and the *desuetude* in which the bird had formerly hid himself. When he (Cleveland) was still President, the writer called at the White House to view the bird, as he is "something of" an ornithologist as well as "something of" a book agent.

Being seated in an ante-chamber, possessed of expectancy to see the Chief Magistrate, who would show me the cuckoo, I was startled by a clock, almost overhead, emitting a cuckoo, which said a piece of time and retired again into the clock. This reminded me of an incident in a hotel dining-room not a thousand miles from Washington, to which I was witness a short time before. A young man came therein to dine and brought with him an unfortunate idiotic brother. The first round of eating was excitementless, but when the waitress appeared to see what more might be desired, the idiot held out at arm's length across the table his empty potato dish. She looked inquiringly (expecting him to *speack* his wants) when he yelled "*hoo-hooit!*" so loudly that every one in the dining room was

startled, and the waitress dropped several dishes on the floor in many pieces. The diners laughed so heartily that the proprietor came in hurriedly to see if the "place" was still there.

At this recollection I fell to laughing. The usher noticing me caused my ejection idiotically from the White House; wherefore I never saw the cuckoo nor the President. Humorous reminiscences may be costly indulgences. I had spent \$9.59 for a railway ticket and lost a \$2.98 commission on my book—total \$12.57.

#### CHARACTER.

Character is like a jewel; if you wear it your person will be ornamented to the gratification of your neighbors and yourself; while if you put it off, you may lose it entirely, or at best, it will not serve its purpose while unworn.

Even a dog is known by his character. In olden times the character of dogs was very bad; also of some men. To this end, Hazael made a fine bluff by demanding, "Is thy servant a dog?" (II. Kings, viii. 13.)

The book agent is no dog although often treated as such—by dogs. Yet he passes on with Christian meekness to the next man who has no suspicion of doghood because he is a gentleman.

But, as I said, character is a precious jewel. The book agent carries his character with him and lets its light shine like an electric headlight to illumine the path of fellow-men.

Read Smiles on Character and screw yourself up to a high tension on it. All great writers have spoken well of character. See the Essays of Emerson or Bacon. The bacon of this essay is not so old or so strong as the real Bacon, yet I trust it will bear the taste of freshness and by that quality compensate the eater of it.

In an obscure country place I was canvassing for "The Royal Path of Life" in which every man, woman and child should tread. It is a glorious book.

The book agent is "all things to all men" and *tries* to be just the right man to each. Should he meet a man whose profanity and general hideousness of character doth hedge him like a king, he is apt to be religious and thrust a severe reflection under the fifth rib of his adversary, and hypnotize him.

The subject in question was a breeder of swine on a large scale; and rich. He was a veritable swine-lord and apparently the lordliest specimen of human swine I ever met. His reception of me, gentle reader, was a terrifying grunt. The Prodigal Son,

although fond of swine, was inwardly a gentleman.

He (the swiner) was just sitting down to breakfast with his family and told me I had better move on without delay if I regarded my health.

"My dear sir," said I, "I perceive you have not yet enjoyed the mollification of your morning coffee. I apologize for the untimely intrusion, but will you not let me sit down even in the meanest corner and rest for a few minutes?"

"Very well," he snorted, "sit down there."

When breakfast was over, I said to him and his good wife, "I want to say just a word to you. I am in the royal path of life. Have you ever heard of it? It is beautiful. It leadeth through meads of roses and goeth straight into heaven. And who would not go there?" And getting out my book, I showed them how pleasant was the path and how inevitably and soon we should stand upon the brink of the precipice of another world where book agents, farmers and swineherds should be linked in eternal friendship. I showed them the beautiful pictures where the grandfather and grandmother in the glory of a ripe and righteous old age were glancing backward along the corridors of their earthly pilgrimage, in the royal path; and forward to the near fruition of it.

When I looked up the whole family was in tears.



Father and mother for the joy of it and the penitence which that joy presupposeth; and the children cried simply because of the unusual catastrophe of their parents' tears.

"And now," I said softly, "shall I leave you one of these glorious books?"

I was in earnest; the book is one which no family should be without and I felt every word I said.

The husband promptly responded, "Yes." The wife bought an extra copy for her sister, and insisted on cooking me a brand-new breakfast, and both said that their home should be my dwelling-place so long as I remained in the neighborhood. The husband invited me to go around with him in his buggy one whole day and treated me to the finest scenery in the foothills of the Catskills, and his "Say so" got me an order at almost every house.

This man had a hoggish business which made him gruff and free from all sophisticated guile, and yet, like the prodigal swineherder, he will go to heaven because he carried a heart capable of repentance and repented at once upon the opportunity of it. The trouble with most people is that they have no hearts that are *meat* for repentance; it will not feed on them.

Farmers have minds as much as any men. Nature is the mother of wisdom and those associated with

her may have much of it; while those who look only against brick walls, are (if there be no ameliorating circumstances) apt to become stultified and stunted.

If you want a boy to become wise and great, and perchance a book agent, to whom human nature is an open book, by all means raise him in the country and keep him there until his mind is saturated with nature and the virtue of hard work; for if his mind be wise and his sinews properly knitted, no one will ever attempt to treat him as a dog, although he be a servant or a book agent.

#### ON DEBT.

They say a dishonest or untrustworthy man always has some "cast" in his eye. I have never met an old creditor of mine but both my eyes have been *cast*—either leeward or windward or heavenward. Debtors are all looking for a rift in heaven to receive them. The place is full of them. The debts which men neglect to pay will be summed up in the "debt of nature"—which is a fearful debt. It's a heap big sum which makes us stand aghast at last. How many men have been made cross-eyed by inability to pay their debts, I do not know. Bradstreet reports them as ninety-five in every hundred among business men.

The debt which men owe to Literature is never paid, except in small instalments.

### ON TORTS.

Lawyers suffer from torts and are prone to retort on the book agent and everybody else. They are members of the court, which is one huge retort itself, heated seven times, into which all legal sinners are cast for refinement and their dross, the fat, melteth until it runneth, like so many rivulets, into those *final* retorts—the lawyers' pockets. They, the lawyers, are the mythical gods which do eat the substance left on the Altar of the Temple of the Law, and leave not so much as footprints in the meal strewn to track them. But without them the votaries of the Law would be godless. Laws are the girders which hold together the great hives (nations) of human bees. They who make these girders, as well as those who are forever riveting on new "braces," are entitled to the respect due "architects of fate," each according to the size of the *brace* he can make.

But *Law* emanates from the Creator a *Voice*, which, spreading itself an invisible net over the whole universe, bindeth unto their effectual salva-

tion all creatures save man whose lawyers untwist the strands of the law so that he (the man) falls through into the cave. Man, being caught in the net of Universal Law (*nolens volens*) like fishes in a drag-net, is a lawyer *ipso facto* by nature, and is ever meddling with law in some part. His case is hopeless because he is his own lawyer. This applies to counsellors also.

### A CLEAR HAVANA.

During my peregrinations in 1898, I called on President McKinley.

Referring to the condition of Cuba and the progress of the war, he remarked, "All I want is a clear Havana."

I drew out my cigar case and handed him one, upon which he said, "You understand me exactly."

When statesman meets, etc.

### WALL STREET.

Wall Street is the great lobster bed of the United States.

Wall Street men are not lobsters.

The lobsters are those who come there to spawn

their cash—the roes of wealth. They come from all over the country and the world.

The place used to be famous for spring lamb with U. S. mint sauce; but now lobster a la Morgan, or devilled lobster per Gates, are the me&u. Ask those who are in “steal.”

Why a lobster should want to be devilled in Wall Street, or any other place, is not known, unless it is because Solomon decreed that “a fool and his money are soon parted.” This was a cruel one.

Solomon not having a Wall Street he speculated heavily in wives—and lost. This is probably why he said it. Wall Street men to some extent imitate him.

#### REFLECTIONS ON MEETING A GRAVEYARD.

Going along a country road “by lovely contemplation led” I saw at a distance what looked like a hand encased in a white mitten raised in salutation. I raised my hand instinctively, for I guessed it must be the hand of a maiden a-haying just beyond the kopje.

Presently, as I came nearer, I saw more mittens up and I saluted again, but it was not long now till I was disillusioned and found I had paid my respects to a lot of tombstones.

The place was so lonely I wondered that any one could have had himself buried there. However, such was the fact. How calmly did they rest in that secluded spot! The eternal years of God seemed theirs, and they seemed long ones. I read some epitaphs which were kindlier probably than any words heard in life by those who supported the stones. I was sad. Melancholy seized upon me, and I cried, "Alas! that they all should have died before the arrival of the book agent to give them even a happy word. God pity the countless dead who died without seeing a single book agent! How could they find true rest? And yet how many have done it!" My eyes dropped tears, large tears, which cut holes into my shoes as they trickled from my cheeks. I recited to them verbatim and literatim "Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard," a poem which I had committed to memory before I knew what it was. Then wending my way onward to the foot of the kopje I stopped at a cool spring where I drank their health and mine, and made the following reflections:

"Man, born of woman, or woman born of man (there are some manly women), is of few days and restless. He lives in three sections or periods (if he be a man): youth, manhood and old age.

"His youth he spends in climbing the hill of life

to discover why the sun rises over the hill; and no sooner has he reached the summit (manhood) than seeing the book agent afar off, coming with tomes of wisdom, he fleeth and forgets the sun and finds no rest until old age catches him by the leg and trips him into the grave; whereupon is erected a monument setting forth his virtues and never so much as hinting at his ignorance to which was due every shortcoming since his shortcoming of the book agent.

“No one can travel over the country as a book agent without noticing that it is thickly dotted over with cemeteries and that these cemeteries are growing faster and stay longer than any other works of man. It can therefore only be a question of time when graveyards will cover the whole earth, whose tombstones will be as a primeval forest of things on which not even a grasshopper can live. There is only one remedy for this growing evil. We must dismiss the men whose business it is to put men into cemeteries. I mean the preachers. No sooner is a man born and able to hear through his ears than they tell him to ‘prepare for the grave.’ Thus they hasten us on, and then steal round to the cemetery gates and ask us to pay them for letting us in. There can be no greater error than to mistake the gates of cemeteries for the gates of heaven.

No matter how good the cemetery,—be it ever so well prepared—its gates are the gates of death; and there are no dead men in heaven. My brother, let me admonish you while we are yet in the way together. Avoid everything which is dead and every path which leadeth to the cemetery. Let neither pulpitators nor culpitators beguile you that it is otherwise. If a man have a smell you may be sure his mind has stagnated and that he is partly dead. Avoid him; he is the vehicle of a plague. Ventilate your head as you do your house, otherwise it stinketh; and remember there is no ventilation in the grave.

“Contrariwise, while avoiding cemeteries yourself, help every dead man into the grave. He takes up less room there than he would on the earth. We already have too many dead men with us. Does not every reform stir up an unbearable stench? Reformers, let the dead bury their dead; it is a mean business altogether. ‘Not until the earth shall topple over and plunge us into polar frost that will freeze into pictures of beauty every passion of man’ shall we be free from the evils of life, which are the dead. Meanwhile we have our cemeteries in operation. They are our modern ‘cities of refuge’ to which, if a man escape, no book agent may follow him. I was in favor of crematories until I discov-



ered that no man likes a 'roast'; and the deader he is the worse he hates it."

### INSURANCE.

Of course only distinguished men call on the president. I was one of these men. Entering his office, I walked leisurely forward to his desk. He was the president of an immense life insurance company.

Seeing me arrive, he arose, stepped towards me and extended his hand in welcome.

"My name is Wright—Joshua Wright," I said.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Wright; be seated."

"I came to see you about a little matter I think will interest you." (We were just on the point of sitting down.)

"What can I do for you?" he inquired.

"The president of our company directed me to call your attention to a new and unique publication."

"Books? No books!"

(Here he rubbed his hand with a handkerchief to clean off the handshake bestowed on me by mistake, and arose again from the chair in which he had just taken repose to hear my story.)

"Ah, but this is not books," said I.

"Well, what is it then?"

"It is *the* book."

"But really, you know my time is scarce," he protested.

"That's my disposition exactly; therefore let's proceed to business at once." And I dived into my most ornamental canvass.

"Really, my dear sir, you must excuse me."

"Certainly; also excuse me just a moment; the agony is brief. You employ thousands of agents, do you not?"

"Certainly."

"And if they stored your vaults and cellars full of excuses, you would not be president, would you?"

"No."

"Consequently do not load me down with them. You won't, will you?" I said pleadingly.

"Allow me," said he, "how long have you been in the book business?"

"I'm in my second summer, sir."

"Then you must have cut your teeth the first summer."

"I was born with them, sir."

"I believe it. Proceed with your canvass."

"Thank you. I've got nothing more to say. Do you want the book?"

"I'll take a copy with pleasure, sir."

"Thank you; sign here."

"Where were you raised?" he asked after presenting his autograph to me.

"My parents attended to my 'borning' and after that I just grew up."

"You have grown a good ways up."

"Why did you ask that question?" said I.

"We are always looking to localities which sprout agents who stick. Tell me the land of your nativity."

"I am simply a sporadic American."

"I agree with you. Come and see me again. You would make barrels of money in the insurance business."

"A great compliment, sir, but I once tried it and got an experience."

"And that was?"

"It came about in this way. After hearing men repeatedly say, 'Insurance? No insurance!' I was about to desert my employment when I caught up with a man who at once welcomed me. I speedily learned that I could insure him and that the only question was as to the amount.

" 'How much will you take? Ten thousand?' I asked.

" 'Try on five.'

" 'Very well, make it five.'

"And we sat down together in a brotherly manner to consider the pedigree (insurance men would do more business if they asked fewer questions).

"How old are you?" I asked.

"What difference does that make?"

"We charge more in proportion to the greatness of the age, sir."

"Well, that ain't right—an experienced man should certainly go in for less than a boy."

"I agree with you, but the company makes the rules.

"White or black?" I read.

"Do I look like a nigger?"

"Beg pardon, that question was a mistake," said I. I read on.

"Male or female?"

"I'll be goldarned if you ain't a consarned fool!" he said testily.

"Pardon me. I don't look like a fool, do I? It's the company that is a fool.

"Ever have gravel?" I continued.

"Scratched lots of it, sonny."

"Ever have fits?"

"Fits? I have compound, triple expansion fits! Bow! Yeow!"

"The man had a fit for sure. He had me in his fitting embrace. He boiled with demoniacal fits.

It was to be a death struggle. With the effort of my life I escaped his clutches, but it was only the calling out of the police reserves and the fire department that finally saved me. So great a fire doth a little matter kindle.

"Although I learned later that this man was a book agent and that he played a dastard joke on me, my nerves are unsettled whenever I reminisce the experience. So you will excuse me from the insurance business, won't you?"

"Come and see me again whenever you're around, and bring me another story like it."

And so I left him a book and a friend. There's nothing like making friends.

### CIVIL WAR.

I was selling a history of "the late unpleasantness," and called on a genial Teuton, who, in company with his *frau*, kept a little shop. He spoke broken English or broken German (I couldn't make out which), but Mrs. Deutsch spoke the language well.

"Vat vas it you say?" he inquired.

"A history of the Civil War," explained his wife.

"Ach, ve haf sefil var enuf in de family," he responded.

She looked reproachfully and this brought on mutual German recriminations which developed a hornet's nest. I laughed and laughed, hoping they would see the mutual humor of it all. They accused each other of every peccadillo within the reach of memory.

Finally he turned on me with:

"Vat you pring that tam book here for—to raise ub sefil var? I'll preak your tam het off for you."

I left hurriedly. Civil War history should be handled carefully.

THE SAD FATE OF A FELLOW AGENT,  
*as Related by Himself.*

A curious case of femininity came across my path while on my travels. Miss Selicia Wonderland, a very delightful young lady past twenty-five, residing in the suburbs where masculine society, excepting grocery clerks and butcher boys, was limited, hit upon a novel method to attract the stars of gentlemen from their courses and across her orbit, that peradventure one of them might prove her eclipse. And so it proved.

Every new publication that was heavy enough to require a book agent to carry it to the consumer was the subject of her inquiry, with the result that

she had on an average one book agent a day paying her a visit, to all of whom she gave a welcome that made them wonder whether they had not lost themselves, or were in dreamland and about to enter the gates of Paradise. The ordeal was a trying one to the married book agents, especially. She was such an ideal girl! Lovely in manner as in looks. So winning, yet so correct and so distant. Every man of them wondered, and made no sales. It was trying. Disengage themselves they could not from her fascinating conversation. Always the next minute seemed to certainly promise an order.

But the single book agents were still greater sufferers. What could it all mean? But none of them could think of anything but books, and books they would talk, and wonder, which was excusable, seeing they were in the presence of Wonderland. A second inquiry to the same firm brought the same agent a second time, half willing, half hesitating, feeling it was a waste of time, and yet drawn by an impalpable yet resistless magnet. Again making no sale, he felt that he was her creditor morally, and yet who could hold a claim against so simple and amiable a creature?

Upon taking his departure she invited him to call whenever he had any new books to sell—a piece of fine irony. “And will you *buy*?” he asked.

“I might; although I prefer to wait until I can buy a whole library. Meanwhile I shall be glad to make the acquaintance of all nice books.”

“Make the acquaintance at my expense? That will cost you dearly in the end,” he said in a jesting mood, smiling the while, although, if an older and homelier woman had thus spoken to him he could have barely avoided uttering words of censure.

“Perhaps I should pay the cost,” she replied deftly.

“In that case I shall call often, to run up as large a bill as possible.”

“You book agents are *always* welcome.”

“Confound it! Had she only said, ‘*You* will be always welcome.’ How heartless to put a man’s heart all in a flutter, only to drop him coldly to the ranks of all book agents,” thought he. For a second he could find no words of utterance, but summoning all his mental energies he said, “I’ve called twice, so I’ll *have* to call *thrice*. You know the old superstition.”

“When will you call again?”

“I’ll ask you to set the time,” he replied. And to his surprise she invited him for a particular day, but no, when she came to think of it, she would be



out during the day; could he just as well call in the evening? And of course he could.

And thus a virulent case of love at second sight was set afloat and filled the air with its music and perfume so that Mr. Socrates Brownson felt the world had been made over new for his special benefit, although he did not know it. In fact, he did not know himself.

That evening Mr. Brownson related his delightfully novel experience to an elder brother, in confidence. The brother was a wise man. "She is an adventuress, I'll bet," he remarked. "Look out that she don't inveigle you into a disgrace, perhaps stain the Brownson name. She probably thinks she knows who you are and is after money. You know we are reputed to have money and are begging ourselves to live so as to give repute to the reputation."

At this Socrates laughed out aloud. "Impossible! No girl would want me for my money."

"Don't flatter yourself that it is your looks."

"Never fear that, even if people say I have all the beauty in the family."

And there the brothers dropped the subject, Socrates regretting that he had spoken of it to a brother.

On the following Saturday night Socrates came

home so late that his mother had to see him to bed. If you don't go to bed early your folks are likely to think you need help. It was not his fault. He was out of town, there were few trains and he just missed one, and, anyway, it takes longer to come from a suburb than it does from Philadelphia or Boston. Also he was three times seven and felt at liberty to employ his time otherwise than in sleeping, if he wished to.

And so the mother was no wiser except that she knew her boy was bigger. Of course, she was worried when the boy "Soc" made a habit of staying out late once a week. But he was always sober; that was a blessing. A little later she began guessing and feeling vaguely that her boy was struggling hard to make an addition to mother love. Yet this trouble is bound to come to every boy that was worth his feed for twenty odd years, although mothers cannot think of it.

Selicia and Socrates were soon more than friends. A wedding was talked of. A little later friends and relatives were apprised and surprised. The case was "impossible," but the obstinacy of the young people was prodigious, in fact insurmountable. Accordingly the relatives garbed themselves in mourning and attended the ceremony—and a stylish affair it was! And she was pretty, no one could

deny. Perhaps, though, a little older than she told, but what woman does tell? He was a book agent, some one whispered in confidence. Thus two strange families were yoked together by two cussy young persons who asked none of the yoked parties' consent. A peculiar world in which our offsprings spring off and yank us along by the string of relationship, as if we belonged to them. As well pull a prophet around by his beard!

"Now that you are mine," said Selicia, "do you know what I am going to do with you?"

"Do with me?"

"Yes, *do* with you."

"I give it up. I am in wonderland indeed," he said, with some surprise, and thought, "Is it true that as soon as one is married troubles and difficulties begin?" "May I ask your pleasure?" he finally answered.

"I am going to make a lawyer out of you."

He laughed, "The idea! I don't know a single thing about law. I wish you luck if you shall attempt so great a task."

"Oh, it's easy enough if you know how. I'll buy you a cyclopedia of law and hire you a nice office with your name on the door as 'Counsellor at Law,' and while you are studying if any one comes in to give you a case, all you've got to say is that you

have so much business that you can undertake no new cases at present. That will make you a big man right away. Besides you ought to study law to avoid thinking too much of me, all at once. I want our honeymoon to last about fifty years. And—and—Socrates—I have something to tell you which perhaps I should have spoken of before our marriage, even before our engagement, but I couldn't, I couldn't," she sobbed, leaning heavily on his shoulder. "Will you forgive me, Socrates? Will you promise me that if I *do* tell you *all*, you will think just the same of me, and love me just as much as you do now?"

"Well, well," thought Soc., "trouble is bound to come in married life. *Puck* and *Life* always said so. What if her confession proves something impossible? Can I then say 'Yes'?"

"Will you, Socrates?" she implored.

He still hesitated. Perhaps his brother's view that she must be an adventuress was correct. Perhaps all women are frauds in some sense anyway. But her tears came faster and her bosom heaved heavily. It was cruel not to answer. He answered, "Yes."

She flung her arms around his neck and pressed him closer to her bosom than he had been to any

bosom since he was his mother's joy boy. Oh, how good you are! How I love you!" she said.

"Well, now, tell me what it is," he said almost impatiently.

Selicia was composed and said, "I am coming into an estate and I shall want you to be my counsellor at law, and manage it for me, and that is why I want you to study law at once."

He was dumbfounded. "You little fraud!" he said as he clasped her to his heart.

Gentle reader, it is time for us to withdraw from the scene. If you are single it is "impossible" because you know nothing about the sacredness of love. If you are wedded—well, then——

Between the two works "The Encyclopedia of Law" and the "Book of Life" (such as Selicia was) Socrates Brownson made a poor lawyer. But he redeemed himself by getting elected to Congress, so that Selicia has somebody to look up to, and she thinks her neighbors can look up too, even if she did marry a book agent. Socrates says that if he had not been a book agent he never could have been qualified to become a congressman. A man must be a canvasser to get elected to any distinguished office.

## Chapter VII.

### RE-ENTER THE HOPKINSONS.



THE family of Wilkins Hopkinson was a model one. His wife and two daughters were fond of society, and Mr. Hopkinson's means equipped them in a manner which laid claim to social recognition. Refined, cultured, given to the good of the church and the neighbor, as well as the bestowing of fashionable souvenirs, the Hopkinsons were highly thought of by every one who knew them. Mr. Hopkinson took a natural pride in the social prestige of his household, and to some extent participated in it.

Funds were always ready to meet every want or desire of wife and daughters. The sun of prosperity, good health and mirth shone upon them individually and as a family, nourishing them so that they were as "trees planted beside the waters."

When, therefore, on June 28th, Miss Millie Wynkington made accusation against Wilkins Hopkinson that on the evening of the 20th day of May, 1893, between eight and ten o'clock, he, upon paying her a visit, had hypnotized her (which act it

was asserted constituted a criminal assault, with intent to fraudulently obtain and take from her a large sum of money—which he did obtain), a thunderbolt was dropped out of a clear sky on the Hopkinson family; a blow which levelled to the ground and turned into ashes all the joy, the pride and the happiness of that estimable family.

Miss Wynkington, through her attorneys, Messrs. Gazebeck & Biffel, instituted a suit for \$50,000 damages by assault and money fraudulently obtained, and gave the story to the newspapers, which hinted that more might be told. And, although Hopkinson's money and influence secured an obscure insertion in most journals, yet it speedily became the talk of the town, and not a few acquaintances gave vent to the opinion that the accusation was probably true.

What gave color to the truthfulness of the complaint was Mr. Hopkinson's frank acknowledgment that he did call on the lady a number of times for the purpose of inducing her to invest in one of his promotion schemes.

Mr. Hopkinson was arrested, but, as is usual with men of means, was bailed and bound over for trial.

Miss Wynkington's affidavit was made on the 28th day of June, at a time when it was a foregone conclusion that the case would not be tried until

the fall term of court, as neither side could prepare adequately for trial in so short a time as lay before the usual midsummer court vacations.

That summer was the longest and the hottest one the Hopkinson family had ever experienced. It seemed as if the sun looked down in especial wrath upon them.

Gradually the friends of the family took sides in the case. Seeing the havoc the scandal wrought upon the innocent wife and the daughters now just of good marriageable age, the preponderance of sympathy was naturally with the women of the family; and as this sympathy grew it also evinced its counterpart—hate and aversion for the cause of their misery. It was “cruel—dastardly cruel for a husband and father to so far forget himself.” His very friends forsook and cursed him.

The wife became suspicious and whispered her suspicions to her daughters. She wanted to know where her husband was on such and such a night when he said he was going to “the club.” Secretly she went over his business letters as far as she could lay hands on them, and now read sinister things between the lines. Explanation, expostulation and protestation were all in vain. The green monster, Jealousy, had found lodgment in the house and left its slime on everything it touched.



Estrangement grew to open aversion and Mrs. Hopkinson gave expression of confidence in the truth of this strange woman's accusation which had all the earmarks of truthfulness, for every circumstance, even to the minutest detail, was related in the affidavit.

His wife's lack of confidence almost broke Mr. Hopkinson's heart. He could have gone to jail and innocently suffered if only his wife did believe him innocent, for innocent suffering breeds a certain joy which largely makes a recompense.

He could prove his innocence if he could secure the testimony of the book agent who spent with him the very evening on which his family were away and on which the assault was said to have been committed.

"The testimony of a book agent—who would believe it?" replied Mrs. Hopkinson. "If your defense rests on that foundation, let me say to you that I believe it worthless and that you will be convicted. Have you no other means of proving an *alibi* or of otherwise establishing your innocence?" she demanded.

"None whatever," he replied. "The book agent who was at our house that night is a worthy man. I know if I can find him and secure his testimony it will stand. But so far all my efforts at communi-

cation with him have been futile. I almost am in despair. The trial is now only a few weeks off and I doubt if we can get an extension of the case."

"Well, I shall take good care to wash my hands of the whole matter," sharply replied his wife. "Heaven knows I have already suffered enough. The only atonement I can now make to society and myself is to ask for a divorce on the grounds of this suit against you."

Mr. Hopkinson sank back in his chair, dazed by this cruel and unexpected blow, for yet he had hoped his wife, the bosom companion of the many happy years, would wait until the issue of the trial was known. From that day he was a changed man. He removed his little personal effects to the club, there to live in solitude until the pronouncement of his doom, but only to find that when the other members of the club learned of the separation from his wife, he was not wanted there. They all desired to "wash their hands clean" of Hopkinson. Accordingly he sought refuge in a furnished room, where he remained until the day of trial, on which occasion he remarked to the landlady that as he was all alone in the world he did not know but that a cell would have its advantages, for it barred out the world as well as barred him in.

Meanwhile the firm of Gazebeck & Biffel, the

most prominent criminal lawyers of New York, were spinning a web of unimpeachable evidence, which would grow and grow before Hopkinson's face until it became an iron-grated window behind which he should spend the remainder of his days, a filthy felon.

Miss Daisy Hopkinson, who it was announced in the spring would in the fall wed Mr. Robert Hartwell, one of the rich and estimable young men of the city, declared the engagement broken. Hartwell was young and acted on the nobler impulses of his soul. "What if her father is disgraced? Can she help it? No, he would stand by her and thereby prove that he truly loved the girl." But Miss Hopkinson insisted on a cessation of his visits, and meanwhile several of Hartwell's friends asked him if he was still going to see Miss Hopkinson—the first cloud flecks of his own ostracism.

Such in brief was the status of the Hopkinson family just before the Wynkington-Hopkinson trial began, which was on the 3d day of October.

## Chapter VIII.

### A FEW MORE STORIES AND ESSAYS.

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#### THE ELUSIVENESS OF THOUGHT.



THE chief reason why men receive the book agent with irritation is because most men have thought and know the elusiveness thereof. Men sit at the desks of their respective vocations to hold down thought. They are pleased to do this. It is a compliment to have thought. But men who think know the habits of thought, and one of its habits is to be as elusive as quicksilver. Therefore they hold it down on their desks with intent suspicion lest it do escape. When therefore the book agent calls and diverts their attention they are irritated—not at the book agent, but at the elusion of thought. The irritation is as great as the elusiveness and may express itself in blind mob violence toward the book agent as the first visible object. The book agent has not robbed them of thought; he is an honest man; he brings them the product of thought; he has not even

abetted the elusion. But thought's elusion being coincident with the book agent's visit covers him with suspicion; and as far as our feelings go, we might as well hang a man as suspect that he ought to hang. This is also the reason why the book agent seeks to enrapture a man with his thought instantly so that the man will not notice the elusion of his own. Only great men have their thoughts tethered to them so that the book agent's entrance makes no difference to them. The number of great men is large and growing. No man is great without thought that stays by him. If thought will not abide with you you will thereby know you are not great. This I know.

#### LENDING THE MONEY.

Said one man, "I have ten reasons for not buying—one of which is sufficient."

"And that one?"

"I don't have the money."

"If that's all," I said, "we will lend you the money to buy. Sign here——" and he signed.

#### WISDOM.

Wise men feed on wisdom. It is good food; it contains more phosphorus than fish food. Most men do not live on wisdom, and when they don't

every other variety of nourishment becomes scarce also. This is why an unwise man often looks hungry.

Many men think thinking is wisdom. Thinking is not wisdom. "A fool thinketh in his heart," etc. Wise men think in their heads. But just thinking, whether in the heart or head, is a "weariness of the flesh" because it makes the mind tired, and the mind leans on the flesh. Some minds are all flesh. Wisdom does not come from the flesh.

A quaint old writer hath said of it:

*"All men are not blessed with wisdom, but by a kind dispensation of Providence those who are not blessed with it are not aware of the fact and consequently never suffer any unhappiness on that account."*

### THE WAYS OF THE WORLD.

In a place where they had a big welcome-free-for-all sign on the door, "Walk right in," I found an immense dog chained right in the way of a narrow passage, and would let none but familiars pass. I saw the occupants smile at the book agent from security.

The very next building had a sign in the entrance, "Beware of the dog," and here, of course, there was no dog, but the heartiest welcome.

In a factory the sole occupant of the office was a lady bookkeeper, who I could tell by the manner of her obligability was still love and fancy free. She insisted on calling the proprietor down from the top floor to see me. I awaited his arrival in fear. When he came he wanted no books and told me climbing five flights of stairs was not the work he had hired himself to do.

I thanked the bookkeeper for her good will. I could see that no bad man had ever crossed her sweet amiability and made it sour. I am sure that any man as good-looking as I am might, without trepidation, make love to her. Girls not yet in love see a lover in every man; they are filled with a romantic expectancy that is pathetic to a married man.

But for an episode of stiff repellency you have only to meet a man who quarrelled with his wife at breakfast, or a widow who was left without the legacy of a life insurance. The former is as explosive as gunpowder. He can swear at humanity in general without provocation. The latter, sour at first, sweetens in temper as the event of her loss fades into history, and she, girl-like, only more so, has dreamy eyes which see matrimony as a possible, though distant, state for every man.

## PRESUMPTION.

All men buy books but few consume them. Yet everybody likes to pose before the world as a consumer of literature. Wise men have large libraries and say as little as possible. When a man knows much he talks little (unless he be a book agent). The possession of a library is presumptive evidence of knowledge. While there is much presumption in the world it is justified by the purchase of books. If a book consume a man he becomes an immortal whose presumption goes at par.

## LITERATURE.

Literature is like "oil"; if you strike a "gusher" on your intellectual premises, it is "all right." When you have to pump it, it's "all up," save the gentle seep of history in which there is but ordinary money. This literature is historic.

## BOOKS.

Books are storehouses of thought. Without them thought would be lost as fast as produced, and no progress could be made. Thought is the real staff of life, and before men learned to store it in books the world made very little progress. No man ever became wise or great without books, excepting Adam: he was great by nature.



## A RURAL EXPERIENCE.

Between potato bugs, book agents and kicking cows, the agricultural mind is not always sweet and jovial.

Nothing that I could invent seemed to make them amenable to the ways of the book agent. If I wasn't called a lazy vagabond, there was still the difficulty of exciting an immanency to educational vehicles. But I felt sure I did not understand the rural mentality and kept on experimenting with various stripes of linguistic decoration. Still luck ran away from me.

It occurred to me that their non-susceptibility must be due to a condition of partial somnolency.

"What do you want?" demanded a burly farmer as I trod upon his front porch as if I owned a part of it. Thinking it best to show candor, as farmers are covered with the marks of this disease, as a person often is left by smallpox, I replied: "I came to sell you a book."

"No use for books," he snorted.

"That's what I was told over yonder; they said you couldn't read."

"Who said *that*?" he demanded.

"The people at yonder farmhouse," I replied.

"It's an infernal lie."

"Well, let's see now if you *can* read. Here, try

this page," and he read it off first rate.

"I wonder what people lie for like that, anyway?" I said.

"You have no idea how those people over there can lie," he replied. "Ever since my regiment of turkeys waded through Jones' meadow last summer and ate some of his grasshoppers, he has been spiteful."

"Well, never mind. You'll get even. I did not believe him anyway and came to let you speak for yourself. Buy this book and it will remain a monument to your intelligence."

He bought the book. Which proves that farmers are subject to hypnotic influence if you can get the right focus on them.

I now had the key to rustic hypnotism, and worked it for all it was worth, and the following winter, when the farmers had time to compare notes, they found they had all got the same book and got it in the same way.

There was a long article in the "Rural Intelligencer" about how a clever "city chap" once more had buncoed the lone farmer. Yet it stated that the book was a good one and that its owners took an unusual interest in it.

As soon as a new crop of farmers grows up there, I'll pay them another visit.

## COURTING.

A young man whom I tried to sell a book replied :  
"No, sir, I'm courting."

"You're doing what?"

"Courting."

"Well, that's nothing—I've been courting over fifteen years. My advice to you is to buy books now before you get too deeply involved."

But still the downy youth would have his way. So prudent was he that he wouldn't divert a penny, never giving a thought that the girl might jilt him and force him to books for consolation. Over-confidence is a great evil; it leads to extreme cautiousness.

## MY PANAMA HAT.

Once in three years I buy a new Panama hat. The real Panama is a scarce article; wherefore I make application to my hatter early in the season—so early it is *out of season*.

What was my surprise—I may say jaygrin—when I put in my order last November even, to learn that the Panama market was entirely "cornered." I was told the whole supply of Panamas had been bought up for one man in Washington—a Mr. Brobdingnag (whoever he is) to be made up all into one hat.

Imagine my despoiled sentiments on the hat question! I immediately joined the aunty-imperialists and started a world-wide hue and cry, but our united cries were received but as the music of jews-harps beside great church organs.

I leave it to you, reader, whether Roosevelt does not owe me a new hat.

### IMPROVIDENCE.

In one of the byways of commerce I came across one of those delightful merchants who have time to chew the cud of thought and get all the juice out of it.

The preliminaries were of course mine.

"I will not buy the book. I'm squandering all my money on bread and butter just now," he answered.

"Isn't it a fearful waste?" said I.

"Why, it's worse than the drink habit. I have tried every kind of dissipation and have never been able to 'blow in the dust' as I can on these two deleterious articles."

"Well, sir, I've come to help you reform. Here is a book so absorbingly interesting that you will forget to eat, drink or sleep until you have been through it. I'll sell you *two* copies—one for your-

self and the other for your wife. You will find them a great aid to economy."

Bright as the old man was he could not figure this out. But he asked me to come again, and if he could get the right focus on things I should have his order. And turning to politics, he cautioned me to vote the "right ticket" next fall.

"I have always done that and I hope *you* will not vote the other one *again*," I replied.

He was protesting his innocence as I took my departure. Nobody wants to be held responsible when things go wrong. I am opposed to secret voting. It leads to irresponsibility.

#### IN PHILADELPHIA.

My manager (all men of high efficiency have managers, as witness actors, lecturers, etc.), seeing that I was become monotonized and flabulated, one day said to me:

"What do you say if we take a run over to the suburb of Philadelphia and give that town a whirl? You can go there as quick as to Hoboken; the change of air will do you good."

Accordingly, the following day we started.

On the way over the manager spoke of the Philadelphians as a kind and book-loving people, and I

entered the town in high hopes. Who would not take a vacation and increase his bank account while taking it? Then, too, good air has a better effect if respired unconsciously. Lots of people nullify the ozone by thinking on it while they breathe. Some people should not be allowed to think at all. Whatever they think on is blighted.

Upon our arrival, we put up at a fine hotel where omelettes were plentiful, and after locating our baggage the manager took me to the Mint (presumably to heighten my ferocity for Philadelphia gold), and later we went to a little brick house, like unto all Philadelphia houses, only older, called Independence Hall. There was nothing independent looking about the place.

"Let's go up and see the Liberty Bell," remarked the manager.

What was our chagrin to find the place of the bell empty.

"Where is the bell which proclaimed liberty to all the world?" I demanded of an attendant.

"It's making a 'toor,'" he replied; "don't you read the papers?"

"Certainly, but no suburban local sheets. How is the bell travelling, on foot?"

"No, they have it in a wagon."

"Who are 'they'?"

"The councilmen."

"You don't mean to tell me that you have hired out this sacred relic to itinerant showmen?"

"Well, almost the same thing; the councilmen conduct the show. Whenever they want to go anywhere free they send the bell and then follow it on a 'toor.' You know what a 'toor' is."

"You mean a toot?"

"No, a t-o-o-r," he insisted.

"No wonder liberty is decadent in our country," said I. And we left in high dudgeon.

We took dinner and then boarded a trolley car on which we spent the remainder of the day. It took us out ten miles and back again at a cost of ten cents per capita of adult males.

The weather was warm and it was a beautiful sight to see the residents of every house disport themselves on the front stoops and drink in the excitement of the trolleys.

At a late hour we retired and the next morning I would be ready for business.

The book agent learns that human nature is alike everywhere, excepting a slight variation in Philadelphia. It took me some time to drift into their channel of thought. For a few hours I doubted if there was any, but I ascertained later that they run theirs at a higher altitude. The men of the birth-

place of liberty consider themselves at liberty to think where they please, and some simply rest on the laurels of history and have stopped thinking. In the course of several generations this privilege has become bred in the bone—and does come out in the flesh—it does not escape from the mind.

I think it was in Philadelphia that they originated the wooden clothing man. The town is still full of them.

The peculiarity of Philadelphia is its large number of small stores. You find them scattered all over town. Large office buildings, where the population is bunched for the book agent's special convenience, are scarce in Philadelphia.

Entering a small grocery, I tackled the proprietor.

"My name is Wright—Joshua Wright," said I.

"Yes?"

"From New York, sir."

"Yes, sir?"

"I came over to sell you a book."

"Came over all the way to see me?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I'll look at it as long as you have gone to so much trouble."

"I thank you; you Philadelphians are very kind."

We looked it over together and he remarked: "It's



really very fine, but I can't see what good it will do a grocer."

"Ah, that's the universal fallacy of mankind. When you went to school, you doubtless wondered why people had to use books. Yet, only for them you would not now be able to run this store. You could not tell the difference between turnips and potatoes and could not count how many of them made even a 'small measure.'

"Who knows to what future use you may put the knowledge I bring you? Remember I offer you 'The Cream of the World's Knowledge.'"

"I never heard of the cream of knowledge. I sell milk here, but it is creamless."

"But in New York we have cows which give down the milk of knowledge. And this milk when set in pans to cool sheds the cream of wisdom. You know what Solomon said of it. That is what I offer you."

"Well, I suppose it's good if Solomon said so, and since you have come all the way from New York to see me I must give you an order."

He gave it.

"I thank you. I heard you Philadelphians were clever."

There were others who shed orders likewise.

People appreciate your visit in proportion to the length of the journey taken to see them. In sections

where people are afflicted with isolation, I have had them entertain me a whole day just for the pleasure of looking at a new face, and no one has ever accused me of being handsome.

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In Philadelphia, as in every other large city, I saw many people on the streets asking alms. I often felt sorry and thought to myself, as a beggar again accosted me, if I only would stop smoking and give my change to the poor, how much nobler I should feel. I gave him a nickel and eased my conscience somewhat, only to meet the man, on my return, several blocks away, puffing lustily at a freshly-lit cigar.

I smoke still.

#### AN UNEVEN BALANCE.

I canvassed a man who confided to me the fact that he liked book agents, but that as his new balance sheet showed a loss of several thousand dollars it would not be right for him to buy books. I could not get him off his moral plane and perhaps he was right. I then made the acquaintance of a man at an adjoining desk.

"I heard all you said to my friend, so what is the use of telling it all over again?" said he.

"I know it," I replied, "but I feared you might be offended if I did not offer you the book personally. You might have thought that I thought you also did not have the money."

"You must be a mind reader," he remarked. "Shall I give you a bit of advice?"

"Certainly; I am always anxious to learn."

But, recovering himself, he answered, "No, I get \$2,400 a year for giving advice, and I presume you would not care to pay that rate."

"To whom do you sell it?" I inquired.

"Well, to several people; to my partner here," pointing to the man I had just canvassed.

"I believe you," said I. "That probably accounts for the lopsided balance sheet he spoke of. No, I shall not want any of it."

He seemed puzzled, but smiled.

Both were good-natured and told me to call whenever I was in the neighborhood, which I promised to do.

## A TRUST.

The book agent has many things that are contentious. There are trusts which interfere with his business and threaten to oust him from it.

Said a man, "I have just agreed with my wife

that we will not purchase any more books. Don't say another word; it's useless."

"All combinations in restraint of trade are illegal and void," said I. "I shall get the attorney general to proceed against yourself and wife as conspirators."

"I'll buy one more," he said. "Give me your order book. Your talent should be fostered."

### THE WAR OF WEALTH.

The iron shutters of a certain Broadway store were rolled down tight and had a sheriff's notice tacked upon them, and right above this notice was pasted the poster, "The War of Wealth," etc.

Wealth certainly is at war when the sheriff is after it. It struck me as the most appropriately fortuitous advertisement I ever saw. The book agent sees many funny things.

### "OUT OF SIGHT."

Coming across a plebiscite restaurant whose bill of fare was displayed upon the pavement, I entered and asked the young man who believes "They also serve who only stand and wait" how his stew was.

"Out of sight," he cheerily replied.

"Do you mean it?" said I.

"Certainly; why?"

"It's all gone?"

"No!" and he gave a long-distance, ear-splitting yell: "*Beef stew!*"

"*No more stew!*" came the official reply (the voice came through the same orifice which emitted the food).

"Then it's out of sight, I guess," said the young man and smiled. And I ordered *a la mode*. This man had instinctive wisdom; he spoke the truth before he knew it.

There are many bright young men in very humble positions who are more cheerful than millionaires and who may some day be heard from.

There are also many humble restaurants where they fear to charge high prices for poorly cooked meals.

The best lunch I ever got was in a little basement restaurant conducted by a bright little German woman. If she was a widow I knew some wise man would soon claim her for his own.

She gave me an elegant piece of roast lamb with mint sauce, potatoes, peas and sliced tomatoes sprinkled with chopped raw onion (a delightful dish in warm weather), and later brought me two immense apple fritters and coffee, and when I got up and wondered whether I had enough surplus car fare to settle the bill, she said meekly, "Twenty-

fife cents." Anywhere else an equally good meal would have cost at least seventy-five cents.

Good dinners, like good qualities, are often found where least expected.

I have speculated one meal on nearly every restaurant in town.

I had hoped to dine with the German widow again, but she had vanished when I came to the street again. I knew it would not last long. She wasn't pretty—only fairly good-looking; but *my!* how she could cook!

#### IN NEW ENGLAND.

Ever since Providence shoved out a rock for the Pilgrims to land on at Plymouth, the New Englanders have been excessively fond of rocks. For this reason you will find New England, as well as that part of New York State into which the New Englanders have filtered, *full of rocks*. Wherever you find a New Englander you can look for rocks. They are bent on having them—take to them as naturally as actors and actresses take to jewels and diamonds. Plymouth Rocks are a part of life. They claim that a Plymouth Rock hen's egg makes an omelette of historic flavor. Ask for Plymouth Rocks.

The New Englanders claim they are the “architects” of America’s fate, because they have the necessary building stones, furnished them by Providence—a clear title.

They have even found “sermons in stones.” As literature had its source in sermons, we need not wonder that those people are, in the course of development, found to be productive of book literature. They both produce and purchase literature—and absorb it.

## Chapter IX.

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### THE LAST OF THE HOPKINSONS.



ON the third day of October, 1893, the Wynkington-Hopkinson trial was called according to the calendar of the court and was regarded as one of the sensational events of the time, owing to the former high social standing of the defendant and his family.

The evidence of the plaintiff was contained in the affidavit making the complaint. Mr. Hopkinson's chief, I might say sole, dependence was upon a simple denial of the accusation, coupled to the claim of special consideration on the ground of his previous spotless character and high standing in all respects.

The trial must, therefore, be a brief one for lack of the material which a number of witnesses afford.

The newspapers of October 4th once more blazoned to the world all about the erstwhile "noble" Hopkinson and his family and connections. The publication of this news afforded the reporters one



of those sensations in which they revel with a sort of ghoulish delight. During the many years that a man is building up a character and enforcing the recognition of the world, the newspapers take no notice of his existence, much less laud him for a quiet, manly endeavor. Nor can they do so, for their columns would not contain a tithe of such worthy material offered.

But let a man make one mistake, or be accused of making one, and forthwith we hear him described as one who but yesterday was so and so great and to-day is fallen to unfathomable depths. It makes a fine antithesis, a marked contrast. It is fine writing, this giving a magnificent setting of a life's sad climax, and it constitutes a lesson of warning which goes unheeded, for other fools will yet follow after their folly.

Miss Millie Wynkington's testimony having been given, as already set forth, Mr. Hopkinson took the stand and made a strong denial, after which Miss Wynkington was recalled and subjected to a drastic cross-examination; but her story was so straight and simple (and little else could be learned about the woman) that it seemed the truth itself.

The following morning the trial was resumed. There remained now only the summing up.

Mr. Gazeback, senior member of the illustrious

firm aforetime mentioned, arose and, addressing the court and jury, pictured Hopkinson as the customary wolf in sheep's clothing, made a fine precipice of his admitted high standing, and dashed him thence as a vile wretch, too mean and contemptible to live among his fellow men, let alone associating with a lady.

The eminent Mr. Partsinger, of Partsinger & Beispiel, the defendant's lawyers, followed with a most glowing tribute to Hopkinson's character, showed how impossible to such a man was such a crime, and called attention to the fact that not only was Mr. Hopkinson to suffer (if convicted), but that his two estimable and lovely daughters, as well as his wife, would have their futures interred with his—the worst of human graves, and pleaded for mercy on their account, if not on his. But Wilkins Hopkinson was entirely innocent of this crime, and why should not this man's word of honor, sworn to in court, have equal weight with that of this woman, etc.

The judge now arose, and, analyzing the evidence, and cautioning the jury that they might consider only facts sworn to in court, instructed that they must find a verdict on the evidence, unmoved by prejudice or sympathy, however pitiable might seem to them the accused's state.

Mr. Hopkinson's face paled a trifle more as the jury filed into their room.

In less than fifteen minutes the jury were in their seats again, and, being interrogated by the judge, the foreman answered, "Guilty."

Mr. Hopkinson sat there motionless. His daughters were led away hysterical. Out of his many friends Mr. Hopkinson had only two who were there to offer him consolation; the others had shunned him long ago as if he were a leper. There was a moment's silence of ominous portent. Hopkinson was about to be led from the court room by two officers, who were to take him to the Tombs until the day of sentencing. But a few in the court room noticed a man of medium height, with a mobile face, elbowing his way hurriedly toward the judge's bench. "Your Honor," said he, "I but a few moments ago arrived in this court and scarcely an hour in the city. I am comparatively a stranger to this man Wilkins Hopkinson, but I can offer indubitable evidence that he is entirely innocent of the crime charged against him. I can prove that on the date of the alleged assault I spent the entire evening between the hours of six and eleven o'clock in Mr. Hopkinson's company at his residence."

Meanwhile there was great uproar in the court.

The judge regarded the stranger with evident concern, while the attorneys shouted, "Sit down!" and the orderly of the court was about to seize the intruder, thinking he might be some dangerous character. The judge vigorously rapped for order and, arising, motioned the orderly away and told the stranger to go on.

"My name is Wright—Joshua Wright. I am a book agent. On May 13, 1893, I called on Wilkins Hopkinson at his office, 55 Wall Street, this city, in the regular course of my business. He received me very courteously, but all my efforts to sell him the books I had to offer proved futile, he remarking that he had one of the largest libraries, which contained every book of any value that was known.

" 'Except one,' I answered, naming an old and curious book. To which he replied, 'I never heard of the book and doubt if such a work exists—I fear you are joking.'

" 'What will you bet?' I asked.

" 'I'll bet the book,' was his reply.

"In an hour he had the book.

"About a week later I received from him a letter asking me to call when in the neighborhood of his office. I made him the requested call in the afternoon of the following day, thinking he might want some more books. I found, however, that he took

a further interest in myself solely because he found the aforesaid work an extraordinary one.

"This was on the 20th day of May. We fell to discussing the work, and so interested did he become that he urged me to accompany him home to dinner and spend the evening with him. I went with him and had a pleasant evening. Shortly afterward my business called me out of town. I have ever since been traveling in out-of-the-way places and thought no more of the incident until by mere accident I saw a New York paper (at Morristown, N. J.) this morning. I was startled to read of Hopkinson's predicament. I consulted my diary and address book to make sure of the man's identity, and being convinced he was my whilom friend I took the next train for New York.

"Your Honor, if it be at all proper and permissible, according to the forms of law, I ask you to reopen this case here and now and take my evidence in it. I have made bold to address you thus, because it is no light matter to make the innocent suffer as though they were in guilt."

Wright stopped and awaited the judge's response. Mr. Hopkinson's attorneys, who previously had professed no faith in the possibility of an alibi by the strange book agent who had disappeared, now earnestly beseeched the court to reopen the case.

The plaintiff's lawyers as strenuously objected. A long wrangle ensued, during which the judge was busy over some law books. At length he said, "I find nothing in the law forbidding me to reopen this case and I direct that it be done forthwith."

The book agent took the stand and gave his testimony as before related, and was afterward subjected to the most rigid cross-examination by Mr. Biffel, who wanted to know all about him since his birth, and if possible something prior to that event.

The evidence being now again all in, the judge once more addressed the jury (after a second summing up) and cautioned them that they must consider previously given evidence as well as this.

The jury was out only a few minutes when they asked for consultation with the judge. What they said no one present knew at the time. They asked the judge to send a messenger privately to Hopkinson's house and bring with him to court the strange book referred to. During the messenger's absence of an hour and a half, everybody wondered at the jury's long delay. A few thought it meant a disagreement of the jury.

The book being brought in and handed to the jury, they all examined it with the greatest curiosity for a few minutes and then came out to offer their verdict, which was—"Not guilty."

Hopkinson jumped up and threw his arms about his witness' neck and wept. But in a moment the fierce reaction of his strain came over him and he sank down into a swoon from which he was with difficulty resuscitated. He was in a very weak condition. An ambulance was summoned and he was conveyed to an hospital, his daughters following him thither in a carriage. The wife, hearing of the acquittal, came also, and asked to see her husband. He was ill for many weeks, but finally recovered.

Miss Daisy Hopkinson is now happily married to Robert Hartwell, and the other daughter has also since married advantageously; while Mr. and Mrs. Hopkinson keep house and find that trial only fanned into new life a love that was undying. She says now that she always knew her husband was innocent.

Men have, hold and administer the law, but a woman's word, though it be a lie, will be accepted before a man's word on his honor or under oath. I simply state fact; it may be necessary for woman's protection.

It was Millie Wynkington's first attempt in the role of adventuress. She had conducted some speculations through Mr. Hopkinson, had lost, and brought this suit for \$50,000 damages to recoup herself, but acted only after he would not yield

to quiet settlement. She was otherwise respectable, just as was Hopkinson, save in his promotion and speculative deals he had the penchant of using and losing other people's money.

Naturally the Hopkinsons were very friendly toward Mr. Wright after this event. Mr. Hopkinson had an idea that he could most fittingly reward him by taking him "into the family." Lovely as was his daughter, he could not see in her the affinity for whom he had made so long a search, and especially did he not want a wife who had given herself as payment of a debt of gratitude, or any kind of debt.

Moral.—The truth will hypnotize even judge and jury.

Nota Beana.—This story is only a faint. We could easily have made of it a long, cheap, gushy novel, but refrained—for the reader's sake.—J. W.



## Chapter X.

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### THE CLIMAX OF MY LIFE.



IN a previous chapter I hinted at the possibility of an event which I shall now proceed to patent to you as eventuated.

I am a married man. I was not always married. It happened thus: When I was in the bloom of the book agent's life, in the full swing of hypnotic power, I called upon a millionaire shovel manufacturer. I gave him a beautiful "whirl." He did not want the book; but his daughter, a comely maiden of romantic years, who just then happened to be on a visit to her pa, bestowed in the round of a shopping tour, possibly to replenish her purse, requested him to buy it. And what father ever denied his daughter any request save the consent to contract matrimony with a fellow he was not on calling terms with?

He bought it. I thanked her and my heart went out to her in the sweetest gratitude, while she looked me full in the face and beamed with a mys-

terious satisfaction such as I had never before seen in any of my customers for books. She asked for a copy of the order (some suspicious persons require this, as if they thought you might not fill the order), which I obligingly gave her. I felt strange for the moment, but went away and thought no more of the incident till about a week later I received a note from Miss Delyla McGuffin, from a number in the brownstone district, asking me if I could also supply a *de luxe* edition of a certain author's works. I lost no time in calling to see her, as these *de luxe* books are nice to sell.

When I arrived I instantly recognized her as my late sub-patroness aforetime mentioned. We had a long talk about literature. She was very friendly. I felt ill at ease in the presence of so amiable a creature. The ordinary man of the world cannot comfortably associate with angels. The air is too rarefied, or something. I was so bashful I did not think of hypnotism and, of course, who would think of putting himself into a trance for an order which he knew he would get anyway? In this way I exposed myself to danger. I sustained a compound hypnotic fracture of the heart, so that I felt at the mercy of some mysterious power, quite childish and helpless.

She gave me an order and said if I would call

again next week she would want also a *de luxe* set of ——'s works.

I duly brought the sample of these, and felt like a fish out of water again.

Well, I need not tell you all. In a little while we had arranged matters for the balance of time.

One evening I called when Mr. McGuffin was at home, and after we had talked on such embarrassing topics as the weather and got fairly well acquainted, I stated my mission.

"By the way, where have I met you before?" he inquired.

"Well, I'll be frank with you. I am the book agent who sold you——"

"*My daughter marry a book agent? Never, sir! I will bid you good night, sir.*"

At this juncture Delyla came forward, but he ordered her rudely away. I never saw a man so ferocious to a daughter.

"Well," said I, "I *am* only a book agent, that's true, but you may get a better opinion of me some day."

"*Never, sir! You are all right as a book agent, a tip-top man at it, but not as a son-in-law. Society would experience an earthquake, sir!*"

"And society badly needs a shaking up," said I. "What is it, anyway? The idea of letting these

insignificants stand in the breach between a youth and maiden whom Providence has especially designed for each other!

"Who is the book agent, anyway? Does he not feel and smell and talk like other men?

"Wherever a man tills a farm to feed men, or has opened a store to trade with them, or a school to teach them, or an office to give them counsel, or a church to guide them, there the book agent has a right to be, for he is a minister to them all.

"He is the living witness to literature. Literature is not mere merchandise; it is the immortal thought of the world, and has its *apostles*.

"The book agent is an intellectual nobleman in direct line of descent from the Grecian philosopher Aristotle, who founded the school of peripatetic philosophy more than twenty-two centuries ago. Wherefore the book agent is much given to walking.

"The man who will not receive the book agent is either a stagnate, a degenerate or a reprobate; he spurns the gods, for he declines to shake hands with the galvanic battery of thought. Thought is life. The book agent has thought. He has climbed the dizzy heights of intellect and brings down thence the latest aspirations of the mind engraved in type metal.

"My dear sir, have you ever attended the birth

of an idea? At first you fold it in the arms of mind, a tiny infant of thought. It grows upon your hands; you tickle its chin and watch its faintest smile. Growing a little larger still, you dandle it upon your knees and sing for it your sweetest songs. It speaks to you, and reveals a book of life. You share its joys and sorrows, laughing and weeping by turns to keep in sympathy with it. It is your all, a new edition of your nobler self. It attains full stature and walks the earth a thing of might without impossibilities! It lives its span of life and astounds the world. You alone can write its biography, for you know its history; and lo! it is a book which goes out to talk with men wherever found, in company with the book agent.

"He who receives the agent gets the idea—the seed of literature. Ideas are precious things, like jewels which are distilled and crystallized only at high altitudes where few do tread. The book agent brings them down and adorns therewith the multitude. He is the messenger of the gods, if he be not the gods themselves."

And I departed in great dignity.

In a few days Delyla wrote me to meet her at a fashionable shopping hive. I met her.

Said she, "I'll marry you, and you only, Joshua, if it take till eternity to do it."

"Ah, darling, I could wait for you ten years longer than that if I could live without you. But you have stolen my heart and until I possess it again I shall be dead."

"Don't die," she said sobbing. "Let's get married at once."

She startled me back into life again. I gazed into her eyes and saw through them the gates of Paradise.

"Oh, you sweet little angel! But let us wait another week," said I.

In a week we were married. Mrs. McGuffin relented at once, but the "old man" still held out in estrangement.

About every other day I went to see him at his office, just to make my person familiar to his sight. You know what Pope said, "But seen too oft, familiar to his sight," etc.

One day he said to me, "It's a confounded outrage to have you worry me every few days, and especially at this time when I've got the fight of my life on hand, a fight which may beggar me and put me to selling books like yourself."

"I'll help you fight it. I'm a winner," said I. "What is the *casus belli*?"

He stated the case.

The manufacturers in his line were going into a trust and were putting him to bust.

"I see," said I. "What you want is simply nerve, and you will win."

"And——?"

"Why, *nerve! nerve!* That's all," said I, patting him on the shoulder.

"Well-you-seem-to-be-one-giant-nerve! Can I use you?"

"Certainly. But what's in it for me? I would like to lift myself into respectability."

"If you win this fight for me I'll give you a clean million dollars to start housekeeping with Delyla."

"It's a go, father."

"Don't call me father, just yet."

"All right; never mind the father business, at present."

"What is your plan?" he asked.

"Simply this. Get nerve and go the other fellows one better. Let's get up a trust of our own and take the other fellows into ours. Let's see; their capitalization is to be——?"

"Ten millions."

"Well, make ours fifteen millions, and distribute the extra five as a bonus for coming in with us."

"Good, my son."

We shook hands in fond relationship.

Accordingly it was done. The scheme worked, I am now worth a million dollars *by honest toil*, and, counting Delyla in, I'm worth two million.

And now, if any book agent comes to see me, I'll kick\* him down the front stoop and give him an order afterward, just to give him the simultaneous knowledge that I am a good fellow and do buy books, but that he shouldn't have come up the stoop on to my level.

A man likes to have his level clear to himself.

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AFTERLUDE.

Notwithstanding my new condition, I continued for some time in the habit of canvassing for books after the goal of my ambition was reasonably well achieved. It is hoped the gentle reader (I wish all my readers to remain gentle) can without effort assort the related incidents of the preceding chapters as ante and post matrimonial.

And if any one should ask wherefore this further exertion and pother when money ("which answereth all things") is achieved, I must confess that to all men but myself the motive must be an inscrutable mystery until I reveal it, which I now do for

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\*Metaphorically, gentle reader, metaphorically.



the mental easement of a multitude of men who, like myself, are rich.

Riches were the best things in the world had they not wings, and the knowledge of this fact, though they never fly, yet perpetually keeps us in terror lest they should some day suddenly attempt it.

I was therefore beset with two evils: Love, which in itself is a terrible affliction; and Riches, whose qualities of disquietude who has not known; for both the rich and the poor discourse on the evils of wealth, especially the poor.

The melancholy produced by love I shall not attempt to describe; first, because my learning is inadequate (since no man knows what love really is), and second, because what I should say would incriminate my wife as well as myself; and, as we be one, I had better not say anything which might make us twain, for one generally finds it troublous enough to get along at one with oneself in a dual capacity.

But of my experience with riches I would add my damning testimony to the heap which is already collected.

Some years prior to this great event of enrichment I once had a hundred dollars. I got rid of it for peace's sake. If I left it at home, I all day kept guessing whether I should find it upon my return

from business in the evening. Taking it along, I was fearful of associating closely with any one in conveyance or on foot, lest it might be filched from me by a secret process which a few men know. And, saved from this bereavement, I was in constant dread of losing it and kept reaching into my pockets a hundred times a day to feel if it was still there. While banks I would not trust, for how many have failed! In the evening I wondered if it should be still with me in the morning.

At last, in a lucid interval of philosophical introspection, I saw that I was in the grasp of the hoodoo of wealth. "What shall it profit a man if he keep a hundred dollars and go daft?" said I, and had no difficulty in getting rid of it; for the landlady took some and the tailor another portion, while a friend plunged suddenly into matrimony and expected the usual endowment in presents. And then I was happy again—until the present estate came upon me, which were worse than the former, was it not for my dual one-ship which by agreement can spend the money fast enough to make any man happy. My wife, by indulging in bonnets, dresses, polished toe-nails and charities (especially these latter), removed from my mind the dread attached to the keeping of wealth. I know it is going fast enough. And, as for our children, we ourselves knowing—

especially I—that the inheritance of poverty is the strongest incentive to active and useful living, we hope to bequeath to them this inestimable gift in order that they may reach out and get upon life as strong a grip as we (I) had ourselves; so that, if need be, they can sustain themselves even out of the book business.

For rather would I give them such bequest (a very requisition on the world itself) than to start a house of noble American ancestry the scions of which should become Continental Dames (if they be feminine) or Sons of Revolution (if masculine), for out of dams and revolution proceedeth anarchy: and who should be known in the second, third and fourth generations as “2ds,” “3ds,” and “4ths”; for I would have the name Wright go down the vale of life Right, as *first* class goods—as “1sts,” in each and every generation of them just Wright.

This is my aspiration. Amen.

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AN END.

Having now arrived at the ful(some)ness of life, and having done many things and repented many; and having consequently changed my mind about blowing in all my money on charity, etc., it came to pass that, while being yet plethoric, financially

speaking, I concluded to make an immortal investment in a large downtown office building, thirty-nine stories high, hoping that the moment this noble structure should punctuate the sky, all my worry about losing my wife's money would find appease. And moreover, to put it (the worry) far from me, I searched out a certain trusty man to act as my buffer towards the world, whose official name was Superintendent; but at an early day after the completion of the building the said superintendent approached me and cried, "My lord, I find very few people accustomed to live so high as thirty odd stories and have great difficulty in filling the building with tenants; what is thy suggestion?" Whereupon I waxed wroth and spoke: "Has the blood ceased to circulate in thy stupid head that thou shouldst apprehend me thus with thought? Get thee hence and fill the building with tenants!"

Now the superintendent, being both frightened and angry at himself, left me with great but hasty obeisance and went his way. And it came to pass that, after a little thought, he hired twenty canvassers and directed them to go and solicit every respectable tenant in the city, but they would not. Then said the superintendent to his canvassers, "Go out and hire and bribe men to come into the building!" which they did; and soon filled the building

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even to the thirty-ninth story, much to the regret and loss of the other landlords of the city. But I never had any sympathy for landlords and cared not.

I even went and took an office myself at the terms offered—rent free for three to six months and cartage in paid. And thus it was that I engaged new trouble; for among my tenants was a certain man named Flannagan, who thought he was a helophaman, and such he certainly was. This man, a solicitor (lawyer) himself, had a mortal antipathy to being solicited by agents. His suite was on the twenty-second floor, and having made himself cognizant that I was the owner of the building (which he did by soliciting the information), he did, at the first call of an agent, ring me up personally on the private telephone line, and asked how I could expect him to pay the rent (the free term of six months had yet five to run) if I allowed him to be pestered to death by agents calling on him. I told him he had the wrong end of the building: to ring up the superintendent in the basement. (My office was on the top floor, I being fond of scenery.) The next day he 'phoned me again that he could get no relief from the basement and again threatened non-payment of rent. I spoke some words which fused the wires in the upper half of the building; nothing

makes me madder than unreasonableness about rent. Result, an electrical repair bill which would have supported Flannagan for life. I told him to please move; but he replied he had a three years' lease of his office and would I not move and get him an efficient landlord? And he was not the only one; other tenants, even those who were agents themselves, complained about the number of agents calling on them; but Flannagan was the ripest of the lot.

I had the superintendent hire three men to do nothing but ferret and chase out agents; but even then we would hear several times a day from Flannagan. We soon learned to know his ring, just as you get to know the footsteps of a friend, and disconnected our 'phones the moment he rang; which he discovered in a few days, and then his fury overflowed through the whole building like as if he was the Ohio River in January at Cincinnati. He came up to my office personally to see me about the agent trouble, which gave me the first sight I ever had of Flannagan. Dressed as he was, in a red face, long nose, large bat ears, a high collar, little black necktie, and a Prince Albert coat with the longest tails I ever saw, which gave a flap with every pump of breath, I feared indeed he was an apparition. I stepped into the inner office and climbed into my

large roll-top desk, telling the office boy to say to him I had gone away.

The superintendent forthwith got a similar visit, and after standing a moment to look and listen at *it*, darted down stairs into the engine room in the sub-basement and yelled to the engineers to look out, the devil was after them. Well, you know how it is yourself. There, in a half-lit room where fly-wheels bend their backs like demons to their task, superstition will easily hatch. The superintendent ran in around one of the engines where Pete, the head engineer, was, and there came after him Flannagan, his Prince Albert coat tails flying like the wings of a young prehistoric bat. Pete gave a yell of frenzied terror; his features were demonized, and he fled. So did the assistant engineers and the stokers and wipers—all ran up stairs in wild stampede, leaving the superintendent and Flannagan and the engines all alone to run it out. It was

In again and out again,  
Up again and down again,  
Forward now and back again,  
Backward then  
And forth again,  
So that he breathed

It was a sin.  
But still pursued  
By Flannagan,  
Until at last  
The fly-wheel  
Caught him,  
At which he gave a piercing scream.  
To bring a man  
To such a lan'!  
But the wheel  
It turned  
Steady as hell  
Has burned:  
Yanking him  
Up again and  
Down again.  
Still round  
Again and  
Round again,  
Shouting at each turn:  
"I'm Flannagan!"  
But the superintendent cried out:  
"Puttin' on again!  
You certainly was  
A helophaman,  
If you were called



A Flannagan,  
So come again  
Be gone again,  
I'll turn on steam  
Till it will seem  
As if the devil  
Was Flannagan!"  
The engine sped  
Enough is said:  
His pieces filled  
Almost a shed  
And now his name  
*Is* Flannagan.

After hiring an entire new crew of engineers, stokers and wipers, we started the building up again, and now if there should apply to me for tenantship a man named Flannagan I think I should tear down the whole building and give the bricks away to build churches. I shall never be the same man again.

Neither shall I ever directly or indirectly employ another agent. And if I catch, in my building, an agent of another landlord soliciting my tenants to rent free with him—well, his name *will* be Flannagan.

## POSTSCRIPT.

I have since let the whole building to the Great South-East-West Life Insurance Company, which certainly knows how to handle agents. It has out canvassing daily 19,000 agents in this city alone, so that the life of its citizens is such they will gladly insure and prepare to die. And the company will not tolerate a single agent of any other kind or description in my (its) building. I think the company would kill a book agent on sight.

After leasing them the building I entered it one day to transact business with the company, and, carrying a visible package, came near being ejected from my own property. The assertion that I owned the building was taken as the bluff of a book agent. This drove the iron into my heart.

I cannot close without confessing to a "strange feeling" which possesses me constantly, to my great distress—a distress not keen or distinct but vague and constant; namely, ever since my advent into wealth the intrinsic value of my own person feels excruciatingly great. I feel as though I were a priceless "peach-blow" vase walking or riding about and liable to marring or breaking at any moment. I have taken a million dollar accident policy and as large a life policy, but it has not removed the uncomfortable feeling.

## Chapter XI.

### APPENDIX.

PROF. VON OFFENBAR'S PRESCRIPTION FOR  
HYPNOTINE,  
*or Spirits of Hypnotism.*

1. Take equal parts (large) of

Capacity  
Audacity  
Pertinacity  
Rapacity  
Loquacity  
Perspicacity  
Bombasity  
Profundacity  
Opacity  
Contracity  
Sagacity  
Vivacity  
Tenacity  
Stickacity  
Stipulacity  
Fallacity

Veracity  
Humilacity  
Gentacity.

(Any druggist keeps them.)

2. Grind them separately into impalpable dust and mix thoroughly.

Then put them into a large bottle and fill up with tongue oil and shake till the substance is of the consistency of New Orleans molasses.

3. Each morning after breakfast take one dessert spoonful diluted in water; or if you were born with a weak stomach, boil the syrup into a salve and embalm yourself with it from head to foot, rubbing it in well. (A powerful tonic.)

(Note.—The syrup is the best spring medicine and will help doctors, lawyers, preachers and statesmen out of that “tired feeling.”)

4. Then, if your inner construction was correctly designed and you haven't poisoned your system with alcoholics or narcotics, you will have the equipment for a book agent, or you'll make a good drummer. In fact you can conduct any extraordinary business.

The prescription above given will, if assiduously taken, develop the hypnotic faculty. Its *heæerei*, but anything to win success.

## A Bower of Book Agent Poetry.

*In Convalescence.*

---

THERE'S A NEW TROUBLE IN THE LAND.

There's a new trouble in the land :  
I smell it in the air and from the sand,  
Coxey and his army have gone far agee,  
But now the frog is hopping over the lea.

And yet I love the frog, a harbinger of spring,  
He just begins to pipe ere the birds begin to sing,  
His vanguards cautiously are peeping from the  
muds,  
Crying Peet, Peet, Peet, it's time to poise for thuds.

Top coats are still in fashion but will soon be on  
the wane,  
When the boys and misses on their bikes go riding  
down the lane  
To take a lengthy journey, make a visit to Dame  
Nature, far afield,  
For no nature is near home, or no rapture does it  
yield.

So they're off, the boys and girls, watched with  
scorn by their old dads,

Who are justly down on all the later fads;  
For, when they were young, there were no bicycles,  
And that's just why they hate them now like icicles.

So there's a new trouble in the land:

Jim Gudgeon also is a-training his new military  
band,

And is sure to make great trouble with his practice  
miles around

Till the neighbors wish the whole outfit were safely  
underground.

The cats are having new kittens, while the matrons  
stand aghast,

For they've cats enough—they say, "Good land!"  
But the children are as happy, just as happy as if  
how,

The notes of bluebird and of robin couldn't begin  
to beat a meow.

Oh, the kittens are so cunning, and the pups have  
curlicues,

'Tis more pleasure to own them than for flowers to  
feel the dews.

Well, if I could be a boy again and have my pups  
and kittens,

I wouldn't care if every girl gave me their regular  
mittens.

## THE AUTHOR'S DREAM.

There once was an author quite forlorn,  
Who dreamt that he was clean shaven and shorn,  
All spick and span—as span could be,  
An author was he of high dignity.

He dreamt that his friends were the gentlemen  
Whose names were famous in literary ken,  
Whose “stuff” it went on the wave’s high crest,  
Like arrow sped straight from true arbalest.

This man was the author of a book and a song,  
Which had made the publishers’ rounds “so long”  
That the song harked back like a broken flute,  
And as for the book—’t might be vellum or jute.

Now ’twas plain by the author’s cadaverous face  
That he either must die or spurt for the race.  
And as he had done naught but sin and write books,  
He wasn’t quite ready to train with the spooks.

Said he to the publisher, “How is it, prithee,  
That all my manuscripts are returned unto me?”  
“Quite simple,” quoth the publisher, “but ’tish’t my  
    fault;  
At the Criticee, the cat or dog is the halt.”

"To the devil with your criticee, cat and dog!"

Said the irate author, the publisher to jog.

"Where is your criticee, cat and dog?"

Why don't you also consult the plain hog?

"I'll pay for your criticee this time," said the author,

"If he'll promise to read it as faithfully as Chaucer.

But as for the cat and dog or the devil—

Is it not full enough to endure the criticee's cavil?"

Now the criticee was a worm just as sure

As the brightest hued caterpillar in the leaf quite  
obscure,

And when he began to devour the said manuscript

Lo! he turned into caterpillar and browsed on the  
script.

'Twas a bright sunny morning the criticee gay

In the shape of a caterpillar was eating away,

When, ho! said Miss Robin to her neighbor the  
sparrow,

"If here ain't my jelly, for breakfast, as sweet as  
your marrow!"

So the robin flew up and the bright worm she slew,

And ate him at a bite without making a stew.

And now, where's the criticee?—on earth or in  
heaven?

Or 'twixt eternity's two ends suspended as leaven?



But as for the author—he still must fare worse,  
The criticee dead, cat and dog are brought forth.  
But the cat took a fit from reading the book,  
And the little dog laughed till with glee he was  
shook.

“By the gods!” says the publisher now quite aghast,  
“’Twould be cheaper to print it first rather than  
last;  
For surely if it killed critic, outcatnipped the cat,  
And the dog so transformed that you needn’t say  
‘scat,’

“The book must have merit—negative, surely, egad!  
I’ll print it at once and the author make glad.”  
So the book it was printed, its praise was unstinted,  
While the publisher says ’twas *his* judgment that  
minted.

A winner into the four hundred thousand!

### THE MAN WITH THE WOE.

Seest thou that man with brow so low,  
Who watches the centuries as they go?  
Who scares all mortals here below  
By telling them how he’s filled with woe?

'Tis him the rod of empire well has flayed,  
Just since, because he would have stayed  
Through the long centuries by time well frayed  
And tell why he of woe has brayed.

The miller sang on the river Dee,  
The farmer whistled as he trod the lea.  
Even the dumb little birds sang wee, wee, wee,  
But the long-eared gent still brayed with glee,

Saying louder yet, "Ah, woe is me!  
It's woe that's me! It's woe that's me!"  
And so the people all agree  
That he is an ass well worth to see.

Perhaps thou thinkest I'm nearly dead,  
With pillows propping up my woeful head.  
But do not mistake, I'm not through yet,  
It's the man with the woe I'm gunning to get.

"Who is this man of woe?" you ask,  
"That of the centuries has shouldered the task  
To lower his brow as if carrying a cask,  
Just to show the world how in woe to bask?"

*Thou* art the man, *thou* art the man!  
I'll simply prove it if I can,  
And if I can't, then mine's the woe  
As through the centuries I shall go.

What is thy business? Art thou a thief?  
Well, then the world would see as lief  
That you were filled with woe and grief  
Till cheerful industry provided relief.

Perhaps thou art a beggar man,  
Taught well to "do" your fellow man  
In mart or street, in rain or sleet,  
Or in name of organized charity sweet.

If thou art he, we all can see  
Thou needest all the woe can be,  
To show thy rags of body and mind  
And exhibit to the world a villainous grind.

Art thou that man, the hoe man true,  
Whose corn shows a profit on every dew?  
Doomed daily to hear Nature's pean sung  
By every bird the trees among?

Art thou the man who stead in bricked vault,  
Of tenement stifling old or factory smeared,  
Dost labor in open air, flavored with Heaven's salt,  
And under the open Dome of Heaven wast reared?

If *thou* art sad and woe-begone the birds among,  
Then truly "man was made to mourn."  
I have better faith and knowledge of thee,  
Thou never shutt'st thine eyes feigning not to see.

What if thou laborest like thy friend the ox?  
Hast thou not freedom and its sense with thy toil?  
Thou art a man, not a thing cooped in a box,  
Where 'tisn't plain, but it's an ourang held in foil.

Or if thou wert a pusillanimous dude,  
With thy mind quite all completely nude,  
Then in the solo of woe you'd beat  
Because I knew you'd have nothing to eat.

Perhaps thou art the poet sweet,  
Who wakest the dead wherever they meet,  
While the living shun thee and fail to greet  
Because they think you're a bovine's beet?

If thou art he, then woe is me,  
Because, because, why, don't you see?  
That verse lifts off the covercle,  
And exhibits the poet; ah, woe is me!

Art thou doctor, lawyer, Indian chief?  
Such men have ever but come to grief.  
It is the world's bent—it's round not flat.  
Get out of its way, lest you're made a mat.

Perhaps with theology thou'rt rent,  
That woe both acquired and of natural bent?  
If so, with knitted brow thou'lt go  
Through the long centuries filled with woe.

Why, blest with good sight, still smoke glass?  
Why not make girls now sing our bass?  
If God is great and good and near,  
Then it must be supremely clear

That man can see with natural eye,  
And he can hear with natural ear:  
That God, whose eye beams through the sun,  
Needs not be hunted with glass in dung.

Methinks, Theology, thou cam'st from the kettle  
That Goethe in "Faust" made to boil and settle.  
Thou knowest, dear reader, what came from it;  
I shudder with woe as I think of it yet.

We're living now in a beauteous land,  
Where the man with the hoe may take his stand  
With the rest of us mortals, who shake our hand,  
Glad over the fact that we've got—the "sand."

But the devil take him who's got that woe!  
May he catch him and trip him wherever he go.  
For he is the man who does better know,  
But still delights to exhibit his woe.

He's had the pneumonia, measles and grip,  
Also the smallpox, typhoid and pip.  
He's forty years old and has been busy, you bet,  
And in the next forty years may he learn to forget.'

May he learn to forget! May he learn to forget!  
Is his not the story that brings the cold sweat?  
I'm just getting over the pneumonia myself,  
And there is the bust of woe on the shelf.

I've quoted the Raven and said, "Nevermore."  
But that neighbor still comes 'as one from the dark  
shore,  
To tell me how narrow was his every escape  
As death many times laid its hand on his nape.

Aye! the trouble it's this—Man's *conceit* is his bliss.  
If you don't give him a chance to get killed in the  
war,  
Or at least his physiognomy pretty nearly to mar,  
Or in some public way to get a personal jar,

Why, he's not happy—he never can be!  
Unless he can hatch little woes to tell me.  
Well, let him come on, I've got a large shelf  
For the woeful man who can think naught but him-  
self.

Well, boys, let me tell you, I had it myself,  
When I'd rather blow woes than earn my good pelf;  
But I'm different now—I grow if I can,  
I now almost think I'm quite a big man.

For now I'm a poet, you see, that was once,  
Filled with woe to the brim for the nonce,  
Because, well, because—I hate to let you know—  
Because this woeful old world “wouldn't give me no  
show.”

It was then that I trained with the men of the woes;  
They were men like myself, who didn't like hoes;  
But I soon learned true what as boy I was taught,  
That unless you like hoeing you'll ever come to  
naught.

So I turned right around, and shouldered my gun;  
“Now, Parry (my dog), we're going to have fun.”  
So we both turned right out and we trudged and we  
yelped,  
And you bet it wasn't long before Providence  
helped.

And, oh! this is why I now yell with a sigh  
Whenever I see Old Nick Woe passing by.  
We're devils or angels in *this* world—that's so!—  
And if you don't think it, why, you'll have the woe.

Perhaps you will ask why I write poetry when sick?  
Well, it's due to the discovery of a very neat trick,  
To which to light other poets I'll now trim the wick,  
And tell them a story that's not a bit thick.

Toward the end of a long illness I owed several bills  
(And poets are known as financial nils) ;  
So the landlord came in and talked to me kind  
And told how he also had been troubled for wind.

Near the close of our talk, and before he had time  
To mention a something which wouldn't quite  
"chime,"  
Said I to the landlord, "Death just threw a *new*  
ruse,  
I'm struck with the passion of the poetical muse.

"Shall I read you the poem which just had its birth  
In the beautiful land known to sages as Mirth?"  
Dear reader, that "break" was a profitable one,  
For the landlord he fled like the night 'fore the sun.

So "never say die," though a poet you be.  
There are others who shy at the ghosts you don't see.  
Keep writing away, for mental calisthenics or cash,  
Or just trash for fun the dinners to squash.



## MY TRUE CONFESSION.

## PRELUDE.

When that eclipse, death, steals softly o'er life's  
sun,

Man's work at morn, or noon, or eve, is equally well  
done.

But, hold!—As shadow enters disc of light's edge,  
Physician is called to try the medical wedge.

To see if death from life may not be driven  
Even by force of sledge as mighty oak is riven.  
Then also, robed in sombre mood, the pastor calls  
To see where collar and hames have left its galls.

For now, the human burden beast about to be lost,  
His (all men's) sympathies are wildly tossed  
Like souls of ants in cockle-boats on pools,  
Who're playing sailors, looking wise, and acting  
fools.

'Twas at such time, tossed on sick-bed,  
When fever ghosts and ruminations filled the head,  
The doctor gone, the nonce; the pastor came at last  
To bring good cheer and hear confession for repast.

## THE CONFESSION.

Much as I love to see you, doctor,\* when I'm nearly  
dead,  
I'd give ten thousand more, this you can safely bet,  
To see you for one hour when I'm hale and gay,  
Then for three days, or years, when in my coffin I  
shall lay.

My first verse, 'twas so hard the thought with words  
to rhyme—  
It's more like hop of flea than flight of bird sublime.  
But, doctor, if exercising patience you will try,  
I'll circle up and round till I shall soar the sky.

My plaint to ask—Why do you priests and pastors  
stay  
So much around the dead who haste into decay?  
Is it that death does charm like snake a bird?  
Or are you only here the dead, when dying, to gird?

Nay, it must be that you do truly think  
The blessed word if broken even at the brink  
Proves instant, holy yeast to help sinner of heaven  
to think,  
Or pitch the blearing eye to catch of heaven one  
wink.

---

\*Rev. Doctor.

And having caught so much as but the pitch,  
The smeared soul shall make its flight as straight  
As if it had never seen even one sin's ditch,  
And, like true homing pigeon, safely reach the gate.

Aye, so you must think, doctor, else I may  
Be free thee of thy sleeked hide to flay.  
For I should spurn thee, doctor, as a lynx,  
Were I to think you came to catch my latest blinks!

We shall not die, dear doctor, you and I,  
Nor hardly any of our fellow men;  
For all of us who mortal breath do sigh  
Have kept a latent spark of highest spirit gnomen.

Gnomen may sound strange, dear doctor, if applied  
To the Great Spirit invisible, to whom in kinship  
tied  
We call each other brothers knit by holy band;  
But *all* words are holy, doctor, in that Better Land.

What is this life we see in you or me?  
When spirit leaves the body whereunto doth it flee?  
We cry with one accord—"To heaven! to heaven!"  
(Unless forsooth he didn't use *our* leaven.)

We are but humble ghosts, or gnomes, tailored in  
weak flesh,  
Caught into this world of sin like birds are caught  
in mesh.

Sweet, overwhelming passion is the trap that's  
neatly set,  
To catch a holy elfin out of heaven into earth's net.

And when we've pondered all and well and say for-  
get,  
Because Life-mystery's birth among men isn't due  
quite yet,  
Then we again unto the sweet psalms of old do turn,  
Our only solace then, to find the mystic flame there  
still doth burn.

Man is a ghost veiled, for a penance, in this flesh,  
Veiled is he, *blind*; were he to see, would he old  
straw still thresh?

Would he make poems, idle poems, when  
The world is filled with poems, as dead leaves fill  
glen?

Pray, doctor, do forgive the foolish lines I've writ!  
I fear their timber makes but simply an idle spit,\*  
That turns and turns, and burns and burns,  
But does not hold of healthy meat even one small  
bit.

---

\*NOTE.—Spit used in roasting meat before an open fire.

But, doctor, now to get the sum of it,  
Whether from full or empty spit;  
Don't let's quite so solemn sit.  
Was not superstition's curtain slit?

I do not mistake your faith for dark superstition;  
Your kindly presence to me is no apparition.  
I but endeavor frankly to declare my soul's position.  
And I do believe that our minds have quite the same  
vision.

It isn't that I am flippant or irreverent,  
Nor that true religion is to me a matter irrelevant.  
I appreciate sincerely what reason proves is heaven-  
sent,  
And to aspirations thitherward do constantly give  
vent.

You do not think the sun is brighter  
Than God's eye that's smiling through it?  
Or be the God of gods still mitred by a thousand  
puny ants,  
Who claim their twisted creeds the only roads yet  
lit,  
You and I do know, dear doctor, that He's *free* and  
smiles and chants,

Chants through every ear of nature  
One great pean of thrilling bliss,  
And it's this, when *over-religious*,  
That we solemnly do miss.

Here yet the best friendship man is apt to yield  
Is to bid good-bye his neighbor when he last does go  
afield.

And yet 'tis sweet to hear the parting, as the wel-  
coming words,

As we migrate earthward, heavenward, with the  
seasons, like the birds.

I do not write to complain of even an unkind fate.  
I long have gladdened my heart by ceasing the  
faintest hate;  
Nor do you want to think, doctor, that I've turned  
poetaster  
To pay thee for thy kindly office of true and holy  
pastor.

If now I'm still at fault, it may be heaven's decree  
That I am blind—still fail my proper place to see.  
But I have truly striven for light of truth as hard  
As ever did sage, preacher, philosopher or bard.

I've had an ideal high as ever mortal man  
To transform this earth upon a heavenly plan.  
And still believe it is a scheme sublime;  
But idealists are referred, for room, to happier  
clime.

Not only for their sustenance, but for sympathy,  
Which is but fit, for all men under the sky  
Are privileged, or doomed, their bread to earn,  
The secret of which privilege I've tried hard to  
learn.

Preachers, idealists, martyrs, live but for a day,  
And being the more great and good the world  
spurns them faster away.  
Yet their self-sacrifice was the lever which the  
world  
Out of suffering, vileness, ignorance has page by  
page unfurled.

(The proof that I'm not great is found in this:  
That thus far in my life I never a meal did miss.  
Yet to be and do good, Oh, how hard I've tried!  
But even brobdingnagian is by death's minions  
tied.)

Perhaps we err in thinking this world's a great  
machine

In which each human being is but an humble cog  
between.

All are not cogs of a given religious size,  
Else how distinguish 'twixt the sinful fools and  
wise?

'Tis here theology goes so vast astray,  
Beats into insensibility, or spurns, a genius Burns  
or Gray.

It makes its rules for men all of one size,  
And says that's doctrine sure as ever faithful sun-  
rise.

Ah, would my mind were of the common lot,  
That I might be content to "propagate and rot."  
But fate to me has an unkindlier portion given,  
I must forever strive, forever with be striven.

Oh, might I but for one brief year sweet, restful  
calm to see

Like birds of heaven, free, artless, good to be;  
Free from all nagging care, but freer still from  
doubt

That cheats the mind of peace and blots God's  
heaven out.



'Tis thus my mind is balanced and hung between  
The crank and the concentric of the huge machine.  
Too lenient, catholic, now to fight devils God for a  
purpose made,  
I lie, though ill content, like Jonah dreaming in the  
shade.

It's here my woe will come, I have no doubt,  
Some day I must act, or shall prove the lout,  
Then even the whale would spurn to touch me with  
his snout,  
And all good Christians justly jeer and shout.

Doctor, such is my queer predicament.  
I know not whether from hell or heaven sent.  
But this I do sincerely, humbly wish,  
That I might guess the riddle, and escape even  
through a fish.

Have mercy, doctor, on a helpless bore,  
Who in pursuit of knowledge himself into a hole  
has wore  
Till he's like worm into apple blindly eaten,  
Only soon to find himself, with apple ate, he's  
also cheaten.

Can aught be done to save so queer a man,  
That's justly put by science *and* orthodoxy under  
ban?

Who yearns for goodness for himself and kind with  
such great heart,  
He is perplexed to *standstill*, even where to make  
the start.

Aye, doctor, I do sadly need thy pastoral care,  
I shall be gone now ere I'm quite aware;  
I have but one regret which I do oft repeat,  
Which is, that Father Time proved such a sorry  
cheat.

I'm cheat in this, that now I see the end  
(Be it at forty or eighty I shall rend),  
I see life's labor held in waste procrastination's foil,  
My life work in suspended animation for the want  
of flaming oil.

"At ten years I looked forward on a slow, lumber-  
ing age,  
The world a senate of dull, lazy, sleeping men,  
Among whom I saw myself the lively, prankful  
page,"  
But now a whole lifetime only as brief dream I ken.

At forty man should ripen his brain brute,  
As does a tree, in season, its fine fruit.  
But when it's ripe it seems as 'twere belate,  
For then most men discover their's an addled pate.

We're in a muddle, doctor, wheresoe'er we turn,  
The world seems made so that we either freeze or  
burn.  
At forty man should surely spy at sight the good  
from ill,  
Meanwhile has eat' the unripe fruit shaken down by  
the de'il.

If forty years man wastes in trying to dodge true  
lent,  
Shall he the next forty spend in efforts to repent?  
If so, where is the gain or good of life?  
It's but two rocky slopes—one up, the other down,  
in vainest strife.

Well, doctor, I confess I've written myself of brass,  
In essaying a balance of the world's vast good and  
ill,  
Until now neither on upper or lower deck they'll  
have me pass,  
For even the strongest engine's strength is, on "dead  
centre," nil.

Each piece of fruit is given its own peculiar taste,  
And thus the qualities differ that there may be no  
waste.

So I think that the very men we oft do cast away,  
Are the ones whom the Lord will gladly bid to stay.

While you and I, dear doctor, may be very hardly  
put,  
Because our sweet philosophies may prove to be no  
good;  
And when we all are dead and none can even budge,  
Who but the Lord Himself can our qualities judge?

I've guessed the riddle, doctor, now, I think,  
I'll spend my time a-rescuing other fellows from the  
brink,  
And try to make them think and think and think  
Until they're sure of heaven's own welcoming wink.

But just here another trouble; I fear that there  
could be  
That other fellow might prove himself a little bit  
better than me,  
And if that again should be the case seemingly  
quite true,  
That fellow justly might reply: "Why, I'm as good  
as you!"

But I'm sure of this, dear doctor, that there must  
be a good God,  
And that He's tried for ages past to make us a trifle  
more broad;  
That He notes the fall of sparrow, counts the hair  
of every head,  
And will ever sweetly dispose of me whether I'm  
living or whether dead.

That He is the Great Pure Spirit, the Essence, let  
me say,  
Which everything does permeate, everything, every-  
where does sway;  
And that when our dull, sleepy souls are tuned to  
the true rhythm,  
We'll hear His music nature thrilling to remotest  
labyrinth.

And I'm sure of this thing also: those who belong  
to God  
Will know His every meaning if but the angels nod.  
The lost are those who will ever yet look below  
And root, like eager hogs, for sins and truffles of  
woe.

The saved are those who always with knowledge  
look above,  
And gladly do take counsel of that sweet Heavenly  
Dove;

Whose silver and whose gold are seen only in moon  
and sun,  
Whom heaven receives most joyfully because  
they've gladly come.

I believe in God the Father and in His holy Son,  
And in the Holy Spirit who is the "Three in One,"  
For if our God be God of gods 'tis plain as is the  
sun

That as the Omnipresent He can take any form He  
wishes, or any form may shun.

And if the above be gospel, and they say so every  
one,

You and I, breathing that Spirit, may each be a  
true son.

Aye, that's the greatest privilege that God has ever  
invented,

And if we don't avail ourselves, we're already with  
brimstone scented.

'Twas thus He chose to appear in guise and form of  
man

That we might not be frightened, but take a meas-  
ured scan

Of His glorious plan and purpose for us soiled earth  
immortals,

When Himself, omnipresent Spirit, dwelt confined  
in flesh of mortals.

Lord, I have sinned most grievously, perhaps chiefly  
sinned in this:

Ever prone to look to distant good, the ways of  
present bliss to miss,

A lifetime scanning horizon for signs of heaven's  
dawn,

While at the jostle of brother man quick tempted  
to use brawn.

I've yielded to every passion's whim, indulged it  
in every fashion,

While in between, for brief seasons, governed by  
blissful reason,

Sailing over the sea of life so blithely at the helm  
of my ship;

Only next moment, driven by furious gales of pas-  
sion, I'm rash life's anchor to slip.

The Creator put those passions there—'tis true, yes,  
'tis quite true,

But they weren't intended to *govern* men civilized  
like me and you.

They are the winds (or steams) which all ships to  
all harbors drive,

And if we're well-trained sailors we'll make those  
passions not ruin but thrive.

And the pilot of my ship—quiet, serene and holy  
reason—

I haven't the least bit doubt will land her in good  
season.

And when he makes her scud, like phantom, for the  
heavenly shore,

May her cargo be one of great good deeds as well  
as a little lore.

For while lore is good and philosophy sweet,  
This saying simplest and wisest man will instantly  
call meet:—

I'd rather stand, if but for a day, in the shoes of the  
good-doing man

Than in his who a thousand million years enjoys  
deepest speculate scan.



## A Zinc Etching on Salesmanship.

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Salesmanship means, to man the ship of sale and steer it into the harbor of transaction. When no transaction is achieved, the ship of commerce was not properly manned, or a rocky, harborless coast was attempted for a landing. Such an effort must be ascribed to brain-fog in the man, or to strong adverse wind\* countervailing his efforts.

To define salesmanship in the austerity of plain English, is:

*The philosophy of suggestion, practiced as an art, either with or without objects in the form of samples deployed before the eye of the customer.*

The philosophy of suggestion may be practised by the use of advertisements or by the employing of salesmen to make the suggestion that certain human beings ought to supply themselves with certain goods; either because they themselves are to be benefitted by their possession, or others who are their prospective customers. In the latter case the

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\*Hot air.

suggested *motive* for buying is expected monetary profit; in the former the delight of personal possession and ownership or the benefits of use. No goods or properties are bought without one motive or the other.

It is, therefore, the first principle of salesmanship to *ascertain a motive* for the "other fellow" to buy on, and then to suggest it to him. If the salesman does not know and cannot invent, a motive for buying, he has no argument for selling. We need not dwell upon the idea that the quality of the goods should line up level in truth with the statements made to incite the motive; for merchants dislike to deal with fools and criminals, although both the latter like to deal with merchants, and often do so.

Having settled on the motive to be suggested, next comes the *approach* upon the prospective customer. When the goods are necessities of life which "sell themselves" if the empty shelves of the merchant invite a new supply, a perfectly plain, unembellished approach is most suitable; and where salesman and buyer have known each other beforehand, it may be unconventional and apparently purely social. If the goods are of this kind and the parties are not acquainted the salesman's approach should be plain, direct and mildly genial, but with-

out even a taint of familiarity, for previous familiarity is the kind which soonest breeds contempt. Familiarity can only come when the persons are familiar.

In recent years the art of salesmanship has, in the selling of necessities of life, been practised mostly in advertisements suggesting the motives for buying, so that "clerks," stock ladies, specimen dromedaries or "hand-out" men and women can do the "selling," which in reality is, however, nothing but helping the customer to buy. No disrespect is intended in the terms used; it is merely a matter of a clear definition of terms, and without such definition no science can be formulated, no art described. But, as art may be exhibited in making mud pies, so salesmanship may be exercised by the humblest salesman.

We understand then that real salesmanship is exhibited in either men or advertisements, or both combined, in *expressing* words which *incite a motive* for buying, and shall confine our attention to these two alone in discussing salesmanship.

Advertisng agents are in reality salesmen, although unaware that they are such. Their sole office is to create a motive for buying. But as these gentlemen seem to understand their business (if not their office), they do not require our attention

further than to say that the good should grow better.

We are, therefore, reduced to the consideration of one factor—the *salesman* (who however is occasionally a woman, i.e., a saleswoman). In other words, a person who has the ability to discover a motive, or motives, for buying, and to suggest it, or them, in such manner as will create a *desire to possess* what it is suggested ought to be acquired. This *desire* created, the rest is the naming of an apparently reasonable price (either actually or comparatively reasonable), and of writing out an order stating the quantity of goods and the price; and allowing the customer to express his assent by signature to the order. In the *quantity* the art of suggestion may also be employed with benefit to the seller, by remarking that trade is good, is improving, and the customer might run short and lose the profits on possible sales; the motive implanted being that to avoid loss of profit is gain.

The salesman cannot sell without the *attention* of the customer. To gain his attention the salesman should beforehand have in mind the motive which, if suggested, will secure attention. This is part of the approach. If the customer's mind is tenanted (filled) with other thoughts upon the salesman's arrival, his attention cannot be gained until his

mind is vacated of other thoughts. Here is where the *art* of salesmanship comes in; anyone can call on a man and go away again. The philosophy of suggestion practised as an art will empty the customer's mind as an overturned bucket will spill its water. How can you spill thought? By asking him a question which you know neither he (nor anyone) can answer. Tell him it is important for you to know, and you thought he could tell you. He will marshal all his faculties to your rescue and, in doing so, dismiss all other thoughts. Now is your time; wait a few seconds, as if expecting him to prove himself a Solomon, then say, "Well, no matter," and begin at once on your preface to the motive-suggestion that he would profit by doing so and so. A conundrum or riddle often will have the same effect. A vague query anent the leading event of the times will do it. Put the thing artfully—either solemnly or very genially, as though you expected something great or humorous in the way of a reply. His pride of wisdom or humor will rise to the occasion like a trout to the fly. Meanwhile, for the moment, his mind is empty of all business thoughts which would crowd out those of your suggestion. Or, if you have a story that will make him laugh, use it; he cannot think while he is laughing. No two great or serious ideas, nor two great pas-

sions, can occupy the mind simultaneously as fellow tenants. One tenant is ushered out while the other uses the room to distend and disport itself. The art of spilling thought by perplexing or amusing must, however, be practised artfully enough to achieve a felicitous issue. Bad or unpleasant feelings are dangerous. Use neutral ideas.

The trout seen rising or taking the fly—*be ready*. One fly for one trout is better than a dozen flies. You are not there to prove yourself a peripatetic one-man vaudeville in continuous performance. Proceed to your business the moment his mind has emptied out its previous thought. Busy men love fun, but they love still more a busy salesman—one who has “a train to catch,” but sufficiently poised and self-possessed to tell one good story or pun by the way, and *to take an order* before he goes; an easy, slowly rapid man.

If the customer should take the initiative and be infelicitous enough to start on what you know will mean a long argument, tell him the question interests you greatly and that you will be back in a few days to discuss and *settle* it; but meanwhile, “Does he know what will be the real result of the Russo-Japanese war?” And while he is manœuvring his forces to do himself credit in the reply, tell him, “By the way, that train leaves so and so and I

must do business with you before I go," and proceed. It is the philosophy of suggestion practised as the art of "changing the subject," To change the subject is to alter the thought.

If you want to see how strong is the effect of a suggestion, tell a man interrogatively, "Do you know that Mr. Blank committed hamstringing or arson" (or any dastard crime), mentioning some fictitious name and place. In one second he will be suffused with the passion of anger as if the crime affected him personally. The suggestion spills all other thought out of his mind as effectively as a cup of coffee may be spilled by upsetting it; and he is angry as if the coffee had been spilled over his wedding suit. Why? Because when a man commits a crime he spills opprobrium over the human race; all humans are demeaned. But such a suggestion is infelicitous and not promotive of business.

Should the customer suggest such a crime (by telling it), at once denounce it with all the energy of your being, more eloquently than he could do. This will ventilate and dispose of it. Then proceed to business.

Some suggestions can be made by a look or a wink and others are as long as a book. A suggestion is the imparting of an idea; an idea is a distinct thought. It may take a fraction of a second or a

year to *impart*; it depends upon what it is, how long it will take to convey a suggestion (knowledge) of it. Suggestions must be lucid. In business they must be brief and lucid. You cannot relate to a man the whole of David Harum or of Josephus' History of the Jews for the sake of selling him three kegs of nails on which your firm's gross profit is 37½ cents, while they pay you a salary of \$5,200 or \$100 a week or \$2.09 per hour, besides expenses of 40 cents an hour (total \$2.49 per hour), when to make such relations would take you from a day to two weeks. You need something beautifully brief and simple—as transparent as a look of love from eye to eye. Taking this last example, we perceive that even Providence is inclined to time-saving devices, although He is opulent of time. It is the men who take a suggestion from Providence that are valuable in business; the rest are "poor relations," a drag on the concern.

The curl of the surf and the curl of the hair; they are *Nature's* philosophy practised as art.

What is art?

Art is a work of Mrs. Nature. Man is one of her artful works. Man imitates her work and calls it art, but his are only copies of originals. When man acts naturally he is himself art because he is unconsciously artful.



To "suit the action to the word" in a voice that sounds like Nature's, is true art.

As *natural* curls in the hair are much handier than those made with curling irons—and also more becoming—so is a *native sense* which curls naturally into salesmanship, in a man.

When the mind has to be daily crimped before the thought will curl, the man is an old maid and will not earn over \$7.98 per week as a salesman.

Goods are *sold* rather than bought. In the case of luxuries this is especially true.

What *sells* goods?

The *contagion* of thought in the form of motives, moods, desires suggested from the salesman's mind to the customer's mind. Anger is contagious; it is an *intense* mood or desire. Take any mood or state of mind; transfer it by suggestion to another mind, and *intensify* it with sincere (or apparently sincere) *enthusiasm*, and the thought is contagious. Vacuity even, caught gaping in a car, finds itself infective and is surprised to see all fellow passengers gape. Vacant minds take suggestions easily. But this is an inane suggestion; it has no motive nor object.

The more sincere and earnest the sincerity, the more effectively contagious is the thought suggested.

But first the "ground" of the mind must be "cleared" of its previous thought. Thought is a fluid like water or air, only a much more rarefied fluid. *Light* might be defined as a radiant liquid rarefied to the degree of spirituality.

"What light is to the eye, that thought is to the mind (using the term mind as a synonym of brain). The eye and brain are both physical organs. Light and thought, in themselves, are invisible and incomprehensible substances, which are, however, the sole *mediums* of *seeing* and *knowing*. Knowing is mental seeing. The mind does not *manufacture* thought, just as the eye does not make light. But the eye and the mind can let in, or shut out, light and thought, or receive them at *chosen* refractive angles (as through prisms). Great minds are prisms which refract thought into many colors or qualities."

One fill of thought held in the mind too long, it becomes stagnant and malarial in quality. Witness the melancholy (mind malaria) of people who dwell only on "one thought." Change of thought is their only cure.

As mosquito netting will not quench the stench of the Cyclops Oilyphemus in Bayonne (N. J.), so will the mesh of no complexion hide from view

a man's internal condition. (See Homer's "Odyssey," 9th Book.)

Do not believe that you can lead an irrational life and still exhibit to your fellow men that admirable poise of mind which is the attitude of a "clear conscience"; for men see *through* each other—at least some of them.

Mental power has its spring in the consciousness of reality—of *being* what you would appear to be. Sincerity is a synonym of reality. Sincerity seasoned with "Attic salt" sells goods.

The best salesmanship is exhibited in the selling of luxuries which *need* does not help to prompt a motive for buying. And especially is salesmanship required in selling books, which come next to religion in intrinsic excellence, and are, like it, deferred unto a "more convenient season" unless a motive is operatively suggested for buying them now. Some men go a whole lifetime without religion because it costs too much compared with the gain (in view). Others neglect books for the same reason. To such a much greater portion of gain must be shoved into view, so that they can optically compare it with the cost; and of course, the more gain is *enlarged* and made picturesque, the more shrinks the price by mere comparison. In this manner the motive for possessing is created and en-

larged so that the desire for the now relatively smaller money shrinks, and the customer believes himself to benefit by the barter, which is in reality the exchange of motives in his own mind because of the suggestions made by the salesman. Men have occasionally given their entire wealth in exchange for a promise of heaven. Rare as are these cases, they exist, and illustrate the philosophy of suggestion practised as an art by the seller. The much greater desirability of heaven than that of wealth is the motive for making the exchange. It requires a strong personality to sell a rich man heaven, but it is sometimes done.

(To a poor man it cannot be done at all for the want of means—he lacks soul wealth. We refer to the spiritually poor.)

This is as serious as it is humorous. How is this large transaction made? By the art of suggestion to the effect of creating a motive which will blossom into desire for exchange. Desire is a twin of motive; therefore by suggesting the latter into being you will see the former accompany it.

The *approach* in selling luxuries, such as books and art, should be made diplomatically and somewhat mysteriously, in order that the customer may have his subconscious mind suffused with *curiosity* as to who the person calling is and what is the ob-

ject of his call. So humanly gross are men, i.e., so engrossed are men generally with the prose duties of life that, did they know the person calling was connected with the poetical things which are the esteemed luxuries (like books, art, life insurance, etc.), they would give him no attention whatever—to their own great loss and that of the salesman. But made *curious* by the right approach in mystery, they instantly find growing within themselves a motive for seeing the caller—they have desire to gratify their curiosity. Now the approach is achieved. And a diplomatic and gradual unfolding of the skein of mystery reveals to his view something which can be made desirable by a *description* thereof, interspersed with suggestions that he ought to possess it, and why (stating motives).

This is salesmanship: For the man plans and executes *approach, motive, description, desire* and *sale* and gets the "other fellow's" money in exchange for his goods. In other words, the result is a *transaction*, executed by a man, i.e., an action *across* from one horizon to the opposite horizon of the customer's mind. This philosophy is practised (with adaptations) by divines, physicians, lawyers, etc.

From the rising to the setting of the sun is the transaction of one day—the sun crosses over a day

of time. Were he only to peep over the eastern horizon and stop there, there would be no transaction in time, and we should find ourselves in a frigid zone of mind where nothing ever happened. The Esquimaux almost know how this would be, since in a whole year they have but one day and one night of six months each. Few salesmen are among them. The fact that in our latitude the earth "runs" to meet the sun every twenty-four hours, impelled by motive and desire, does not detract from the visual fact that the sun, while standing still, transacts many days in rapid succession. The earth revolves to receive the sun on all its sides; but the sun gives the days by furnishing light. And that man is the genuine salesman who so meets and operates his customer that the customer makes the sale himself in becoming a buyer by subconscious desire. A salesman is positive as the sun, and the customer, although he may become heated and sweaty, will still purchase the goods as if it were a favor to have the opportunity of securing them.

Salesmen are usually full of the radium of geniality and humor. When not so filled they are not real salesmen. They are either "women" or messengers charged with the duty of carrying about samples.

If humor and horse-sense, joined with value for money, will not extradite a man's dollars he is a

“dead one”: dead in sin, or in religion, or in wealth, or in poverty. Some men are dead in all of these combined.

Although I have gotten in a few “goaks,” as Artemus Ward would say, this essay on salesmanship is really serious business.

To become a salesman, you must first become full of knowledge of your goods, and of what, in the general opinion of mankind, is common sense in the operation of human nature. From this knowledge you can distill something which has the aroma of wisdom before men, and your presence will be at least tolerable if not grateful. A man lacking this is either a boy and excused as such, or he is what the Spaniards in 1898 termed us—*persona non grata*—no gratification to have their persons near ours, or ours near theirs.

The more knowledge a salesman has, be it acquired through “education” or imbibed from his atmosphere or through intuitive sense, the better; but he should be timid and cunning in showing it—its exhibition should always be gauged to the intelligence of his customer, unless he be so outrageously ignorant that the mere sight of knowledge and wisdom would hypnotize him with admiration, in which case (now seldom met) you can safely heap on him the philosophy of the whole cosmos, if you